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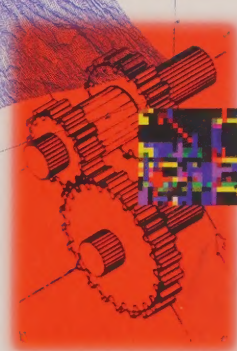
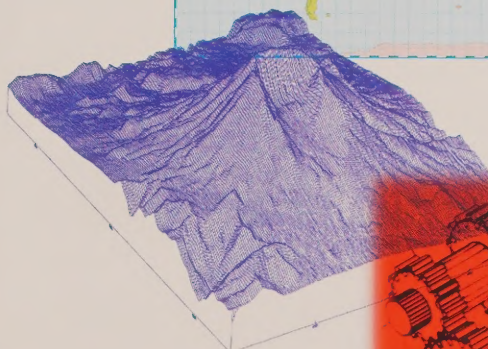
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# For the Love of Learning

Report of the Royal Commission on Learning



A Short Version



Ontario







FOR THE LOVE OF LEARNING





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# For the Love of Learning

**Report of the Royal Commission on Learning**

A Short Version





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Royal Commission  
Commission royale sur  
on Learning l'éducation

Co-Chairs / Coprésidents

Monique Bégin - Gerald L. Caplan

Commissioners / Membres de la commission

Manisha Bharti - Avis E. Glaze - Dennis J. Murphy

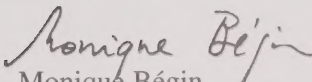
December 1994

The Honourable Dave Cooke  
Minister of Education and Training

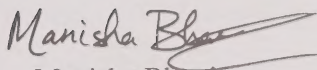
Dear Mr. Minister:

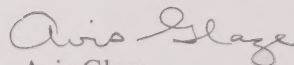
It is with a sense of great hope for the future of the young people of Ontario that we respectfully submit to you the Final Report of the Royal Commission on Learning.

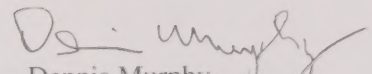
Very sincerely yours,

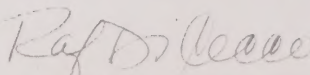
  
Monique Bégin  
Co-chair

  
Gerald Caplan  
Co-chair

  
Manisha Bharti  
Commissioner

  
Avis Glaze  
Commissioner

  
Dennis Murphy  
Commissioner

  
Raf DiCecco  
Executive Director









Ontario  
Executive Council  
Conseil des ministres

## Order in Council Décret

On the recommendation of the undersigned, the Lieutenant Governor, by and with the advice and concurrence of the Executive Council, orders that:

Sur la recommandation du soussigné, le lieutenant-gouverneur, sur l'avis et avec le consentement du Conseil des ministres, décrète ce qui suit :

WHEREAS the Government of Ontario, in support of its commitment to economic renewal and social justice, has identified the need to set new directions in education to ensure that Ontario youth are well-prepared for the challenges of the 21st century, and

WHEREAS Ontario's public and separate school systems are under continuing pressure to respond to the impact of new technologies and a changing social and economic milieu, and

WHEREAS Ontario residents expect high standards in elementary and secondary education and deserve appropriate measures of accountability, relevant curriculum content to meet the needs of students and society, improved retention rates, effective links to work and higher education, an effective and efficient system of education and increased levels of public involvement in education, and

WHEREAS the Government of Ontario believes that it is in the public interest that ample opportunity be provided for full public participation in the consideration of matters related to the delivery of elementary and secondary education in Ontario, and

WHEREAS pursuant to section 2 of the Public Inquiries Act, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter P.41, whenever the Lieutenant Governor in Council considers it expedient to cause inquiry to be made concerning any matter that he declares to be a matter of public concern, and the inquiry is not regulated by any special law, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may, by commission, appoint one or more persons to conduct the inquiry, and

WHEREAS the Lieutenant Governor in Council deems it expedient to cause inquiry to be made into education concerns and has concluded that this can best be achieved by means of a public inquiry instituted pursuant to the provisions of the Public Inquiries Act;



NOW THEREFORE, pursuant to the provisions of the Public Inquiries Act, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter P.41, a commission be issued appointing Gerald Caplan, Monique Bégin, Msgr. Dennis Murphy, Avis Glaze and Manisha Bharti commissioners under the designation the Royal Commission on Learning ("Commission"), and appointing Gerald Caplan and Monique Bégin Co-chairs of the Commission, such Commission to present a vision and action plan to guide Ontario's reform of elementary and secondary education and for such purpose to study and report upon the matters set out as follows:

### Shared Vision

What are the values and principles that should guide the education of Ontario's elementary and secondary school students?

What are the key goals of Ontario's elementary and secondary school system and who are its clients?

How are strong partnerships in education ensured?

### Program

- What knowledge, skills and values do elementary and secondary students need to prepare them for the future?
- How, and by whom, should this body of skills, knowledge and values be developed to fulfill the specific mandate of all publicly funded school systems?
- How should the curriculum in elementary and secondary schools be organized and delivered?
- What is the best way to ensure that more students graduate from secondary school?
- What is the best way to help students make effective transitions into school and from school to work/community life, further education or training?
- How should teachers be prepared for and supported in their new roles and responsibilities to meet the needs of all students? Who should be responsible for teacher education, both before and throughout a teacher's career?
- What is the best way to ensure continuous quality improvement?



## Accountability

- What standards should be set for all elementary and secondary students and how and by whom should they be set?
- How should students be evaluated?
- How should student progress be reported?
- How should schools and programs be evaluated?
- To whom should progress be reported and for what purpose?
- Who should be accountable for results achieved in education?

## Education Governance (within the constitutional and Charter rights in education)

- What should be the respective roles and responsibilities of the partners in education, e.g., students, parents, teachers, school boards, the community, and the Ministry of Education and Training?
- What accountability mechanisms should exist to ensure that roles are respected and responsibilities met?
- What is the most effective, efficient organizational structure for elementary and secondary education in Ontario?
- What models exist for French language governance within such a structure?

AND FURTHER that the Commission is empowered to request oral submissions and written briefs from any person or organization in the conduct of its enquiries and to engage persons with special knowledge in the matters heretofore mentioned to cause research papers to be prepared in areas of research considered essential to the Commission to formulate its recommendations;

AND FURTHER that the Commission hold public hearings in locations to be determined by the Commission for the purpose of receiving public input into the matters under consideration;

AND FURTHER that all Government Ministries, Boards, Agencies and Commissions assist the Commission to the fullest extent in order that the Commission may carry out its duties and functions, and that the Commission shall have authority to engage such counsel, expert technical advisors, investigators and other staff as the Commission deems proper, at rates of remuneration to be



approved by Management Board of Cabinet, in order that a complete and comprehensive report may be prepared and submitted to the Minister of Education and Training;

AND FURTHER that the Commission make interim reports to the Minister of Education and Training at times agreed to by the Commission and the Minister;

AND FURTHER that the Commission make its final report to the Minister of Education and Training; as soon as practicable but not later than the 31st day of December 1994 recommending such changes in the laws, policies, and procedures as in the opinion of the Commission are necessary and desirable to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance and accountability of education in Ontario.

Recommended

*Don Cousens*  
Minister of Education  
and Training

Concurred

*Ruth Smei*  
Chair of Cabinet

Approved and Ordered

MAY 5 - 1993  
Date

*[Signature]*  
Lieutenant Governor

Certified to be a true copy.

*J.E. Tanguay*  
Deputy Clerk, Executive Council



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\*Jill Hutcheon was Executive Director May 1993 – August 1993.



# Preface

Talk about your lifelong learning. For two people whose obsessions, over lo these many decades, have included a mastery of new areas of public policy, the past 20 months have been the equivalent of winning a lottery. We have had the privilege of being able to immerse ourselves in an issue in which neither of us pretended any great recent expertise, about which party politics did not impose particular ideological constraints, and around which there swirls great public controversy. What a treat! We are grateful to whoever decided to choose us for this singular opportunity.

In an eventful year and two-thirds, two aspects of our experiences are perhaps most notable. First is the unexpected lack of consensus that we found to exist in Ontario on just about every aspect of the education system. As we moved around Ontario, we discovered passion, concern, knowledge, myths, commitment, grandstanding – indeed, just about everything but agreement. Ontarians disagreed about what the major problems were and they disagreed about what the solutions were.

Which brings us to our second main observation. To be perfectly honest, when we finished our public hearings we could not conceive how we could find common ground. There was no reason to believe that the five members of the Commission, who were virtual strangers to each other the day we first came together, would not reflect the lack of consensus that existed in the public at large. Yet we ended with a unanimous report. If the argument of our study – that we have the capacity to forge an excellent education system – provides grounds for optimism, as we believe it does, then the fact of our unanimity should offer hope that Ontarians might, just might, be able to reach agreement on what its education system should be as we leap across the threshold towards the mystique of the 21st century.

But it was not easy for us and it will not be easy for Ontarians. We were five tough-minded individuals, each with certain concerns that mattered to her or him far more than to the others. Sometimes we persuaded our colleagues of the indispensability of the word or phrase or recommendation we could simply not live without; at other times, each of us

somehow learned to live without. Each of us gave up something, a price we consciously chose to pay to achieve the greater goal of a report that was realistic, balanced, and eminently implementable.

If we can do it, why can't Ontario? In the end, we believe our real achievement was being able to tap into the common hopes and desires that ran deep beneath the surface of so many apparently conflicting positions. Obviously we could not adopt every suggestion of every submission. No-one can. It cannot be done. But as two long-time political veterans who have no illusions about how the game is played, we think we honoured – and were able to reconcile – the best ideas of just about every player in the system without ignoring the interests of any of them. If each is prepared to see it this way, to see their glass as half-full rather than half-empty, to show the same flexibility as the Commission itself, we'll be well on the road to building our better education system.

As people with some familiarity with such matters, it seems to us that we were also notable in the history of commissions in Canada and the provinces for another reason: with a relatively modest research staff and secretariat, we were truly creatures of our time in learning how to work smarter with small resources. And we are on time!

Our fellow Commissioners threw themselves into their work with gusto and dedication, and to say we five functioned as complete equals through every long, arduous step of the way would not exaggerate the process one whit.

As for our staff, their commitment and devotion could hardly have been greater. They worked impossible hours, were prodigiously productive and superhumanly efficient, and it is literally unimaginable what would have happened to us without them. They own this report as much as the five whose names appear as commissioners, and our gratitude to them is boundless.

It is normally invidious to single out individuals for special mention in these prefaces. But the two of us have broken customs before, and this is surely an appropriate place to do so again. We're certain neither Dennis Murphy nor Avis Glaze – to whom we owe a huge debt of thanks for their significant



contribution – will feel neglected if we make special mention here of our colleague, Manisha Bharti. During the course of our work, friends invariably asked whether Manisha was as good as her reputation suggested. Our answer, invariably, was “Better”. We witnessed her steady growth from 17 to 19. We would like to think she learned something from us; certainly we learned enormously from her. It should be sufficient to say that, on top of her other contributions, the title of this report is due entirely to her.

Finally, not to record here our specific debt to Raffaella Di Cecco, our executive director, would simply be a rank

injustice. It is entirely possible that this report could have been concluded without either of us; it could not have been done without Raf, whose talents, sensibilities and insights seemed unlimited. Thank you, Raf; when Manisha becomes Prime Minister, one of us will recommend you as Chief of Staff (if only we knew the party affiliation of either of you), or Clerk of the Privy Council (depending on which of us, if either, have the remotest influence at that time).

Monique Bégin

Gerald Caplan

## Acknowledgments

Members and staff of the Royal Commission on Learning gratefully acknowledge the help of the thousands of people – parents, students, educators, and representatives of groups across Ontario – who shared their views, who offered advice, and whose experiences helped clarify the issues before us. By participating in the crucial debate on education, they contributed to the life of the province, now and in the future.

We extend personal thanks to the schools: the principals, teachers, support staff, and the many students who assisted us

during the hearings. Their hospitality and enthusiasm made our jobs easier and more pleasurable.

We wish to extend our special thanks to the wonderful youth volunteers who enabled us to hear from and spend time with many students and young people who normally are never seen by those studying education.

We are indebted to Dr. Roberta Bondar for her assistance as the Commission’s special advisor in science.



# For the Love of Learning

Report of the Royal Commission on Learning

## A Short Version

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Monique Bégin

Gerald Caplan

Manisha Bharti

Avis E. Glaze

Dennis J. Murphy







# A Short Version

Dear Reader:

While Ontario's schools have done a reasonably good job over the past century and half, they need to become better to meet the challenges that now confront them. We believe the overwhelming number of our students are capable of completing their formal education and emerging as knowledgeable, creative, imaginative, thoughtful, reasoning adults. While achieving this goal is by no means easy, we do know how to get there. After some 20 months devoted to listening, reading, debating and thinking about how to make our education system as good as it needs to be to serve the interests of society and our children, we have arrived at a number of conclusions that ought to give hope to those who have grown concerned about the capacity of our schools to cope with an uncertain and intimidating future.



**T**o our own surprise, it has taken us hundreds of pages to set forth our arguments. Because virtually every aspect of schooling has become controversial, and because there is so much suspicion and scepticism out there, we decided it was essential to lay out our thinking in a coherent and detailed manner, so everyone who wanted to would be able to follow closely how we arrived at our ideas. It didn't take us long, for example, to see that the learner and the teacher are the two key players in education, and you will see that every issue we discuss revolves around them. For that reason, we thought it important to offer very full expositions of our views on how serious learning best happens and what constitutes good teaching. From that analysis, many of our views logically flowed.

Our full vision of what life in the classroom could be at its best is contained in Volume II, which we call *Learning: Our Vision for Schools*. Because learning is a lifelong phenomenon, this section outlines the new system as we wish and believe it could be, right from a child's birth to his or her transition from high school to the next stage, whatever it is. We know full well that the scenario set down here borders on the idealistic, but that's quite deliberate. We're convinced that, in theory at least, schooling could be as engaging and enriching as we describe it, and by setting our standards high we give society some enviable goals to shoot at.

We also include a comprehensive section, Volume III, called *The Educators*, on teacher learning and professional growth. We make the point repeatedly that no positive changes to the system can happen without the enthusiastic co-operation of teachers – a central fact perversely ignored in many attempts at reform – and that teachers simply can't be expected to perform their many functions adequately unless they're properly prepared.

In a real sense, Ontario schools have been remarkably successful over the years in dealing with students from extraordinarily diverse backgrounds. But more remains to be done. We have much to say about all those whom the education system doesn't treat fairly. There can be no question that schools work best for those from higher socio-economic backgrounds. One critic pointedly observed that the best way to ensure that you do well in school is to make sure that your parents are well-off. Girls are still confronting obstacles that aren't present for boys. We have learned that black students, as well as Portuguese and Hispanic students, are having disproportionate difficulties in getting the most out of schools. It's clear that rural, remote, and smaller communities aren't getting their fair share of education funds. Constitutional commitments to Roman Catholics, Franco-Ontarians and Natives have not fully been lived up to in practice.

In all these cases, certain Ontario students, through no fault or inadequacy of their own, aren't able to gain from



**Society has changed  
so dramatically in  
recent times that  
schools can't possibly  
be expected to  
keep up without  
substantial changes.**

schools what they're entitled to. Success at school usually means a better chance of a job, a better job with better wages, and higher status in the world. That's why, throughout our report and especially in our section on equity, we make recommendations to try to ensure fairness in schooling for every child in this province. The goal must be nothing less than to educate all students equally well.

All this, of course, adds up to a great deal of writing, and we know that not all of you will have the time to read the entire report, and certainly not in one fell swoop. We wouldn't even be surprised if our own families failed to read every last page we wrote. For that reason, we provide summaries of our key thoughts and recommendations throughout the main text. As for this little volume, it's not exactly a systematic summary of everything we've written, but rather an attempt to give the sense of what mattered most to us, and how we as a society now should go about crafting a radically new kind of learning system. Perhaps after reading this document, some of you may be intrigued to go to the full study to see what we have to say about your particular interest. Of course we take for granted that, eventually at least, educators, teachers, trustees, and the like will read the entire report. But we especially hope that you – parents and students – might be interested in our comments on your roles in the schools of the future. We should tell you immediately that in those schools, if the kind of system

we envision comes to pass, you'll both have more responsible and more active roles than you have now.

**What can we expect from our schools?**

During our months of public consultations, we listened to presentations from 1,396 groups and individuals in 27 cities across the province, and received written, voice-mail or e-mail messages, and submissions from some 3,350 others. It was not easy to find common themes or concerns among all these interested citizens, and certainly there was consensus about precious little.

One complaint that we heard, repeatedly, was that the public education system no longer seems to be responsible to the public. This is one major cause of the lack of confidence that so many seem to feel for the system. Although board of education trustees and provincial governments are elected, there exists widespread unease that schools have become a kingdom unto themselves, with little need to report to parents or to the world at large what they are doing with our kids, and whether they're doing it successfully.

This issue mattered a lot to us too. The question of how schools account for themselves seems to us a very serious one, and we recommend setting up an independent agency to make sure the public's right to know is upheld. While we are confident that, in general, no one knows better than teachers and educators in general how learning best happens, many Ontarians resent the sense that principals and teachers believe they, not the public, own the schools. We know educators have trouble understanding this perception, but they must accept that it's out there and work to reverse it. The proposition that the public must be knowledgeable about and have confidence in a major public institution funded entirely by the public seems to us so self-evident that it borders on scandalous that it even needs debate.

There is a second cause for the abundant lack of confidence in our education system: a significant and possibly growing number of people are disturbed by the "crisis" of our schools, and their feeling is reinforced by an



In the 1960s, 18% of students completed high school. Today that figure is 75%.

According to historian C. E. Phillips, there never was a time when critics did not complain that educational standards had fallen.

abundance of stories in the media. Frankly, we find this fear exaggerated. While the status quo is unquestionably flawed, there is no serious evidence that our schools are failing our kids any more or less than they ever have. If we recommend profound changes to our learning system, it's largely because society has changed so dramatically in recent times that schools can't possibly be expected to keep up without substantial changes.

Criticisms of education are as old as the system itself. As the folksy American humorist Will Rogers put it many generations ago, "Schools ain't as good as they usta be and they never was." In fact both major studies of Ontario education in the past half-century reported the disenchantment with schools in their days in words that might easily have been written today.

Everyone from employers to parents to university professors, explained the Hope commission in 1950, "complain bitterly that young people make errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar, and cannot express themselves logically and clearly in speaking ..." And these were the good old days that some people look back to with such misplaced nostalgia, when Ontario high school students all wrote standardized department exams and when only 13 of every 100 students graduated from high school. Today we debate whether the drop-out rate from schools is a third or less than a fifth – by any standard a remarkably positive change in 40 years.

Many parents came to us with shocking evidence of kids who finished high school yet wrote with all the sophistication of a nine-year old, of report cards that seemed deliberately contrived to sound like gibberish, of schools that made them feel unwelcome, intimidated, indifferent to them and not much more engaged with their children. We know these stories are only too true, and that there are too many of them. Too many kids fall through the cracks today. But if there are far too many intolerable horror stories from our schools, it would be unbalanced not to point to the large numbers of success stories. All across this province we saw exciting examples of great principals and great teachers bringing out the

best in their students; in the full report we give examples of the kinds of schools that impressed us so much. We can't say how many of these schools exist, but we're quite certain there are more of them than harsh critics acknowledge, and far fewer than we need.

And while we must be cautious in interpreting the national and international comparative tests that we hear so much about – it's simply irresponsible to report the results of these tests as if they were horse races with clear winners and losers – it's fairly clear that generally our Ontario students are doing all right, but not superlatively. On the other hand, there is no reliable evidence that we've ever done better in the past.

But this is no time for complacency. The times they are a-changing – technologically, socially, economically, demographically – at a pace so bewildering that widespread anxiety is the inevitable result. We felt that disquiet in our public hearings from parents, business people, teachers, and young people themselves. And of course this anxiety has increased substantially in the past couple of years as a result of the fear of escalating violence in our schools in communities across the province.

So we can actually say, in the end, that there is a shared concern out there. It's that Ontario's schools aren't equipped to deal with the future – a problem significantly exacerbated by our utter ignorance of what that future might bring.



**To achieve any meaningful reforms to our learning system, we must help students to be able to learn more and better. To do so involves ensuring that the rest of society helps prepare students for school learning, and that teachers are fully equipped to do the rest.**

We share that concern. In fact we're prepared to go further and say that it's just about time to ring some alarm bells in Ontario. The burdens on schools are growing impossibly heavy. Every time our society develops a new problem – from AIDS to violence – we just naturally expect teachers to be able to introduce courses to deal with it. If families are breaking up, or if both parents work, schools must fill the void. If we no longer know what values we share, schools should develop the moral character of our kids. If jobs seem scarce at the end of the line, teachers should prepare kids for the workplace. If most of the kids who want to go to university can't do so, and if high schools still focus their best efforts on those who do, teachers must nevertheless motivate all kids to hang in and not drop out. The expectations that we are placing on our schools seem to be without limit, and they simply can't be met.

At the same time, attempts to reform the system seem to go on non-stop. Contrary to those critics who claim schools aren't changing with the times, the truth is that for decades they've done nothing but change. In many parts of the report, but especially in the history section (Chapter 2) and in Volume II describing our vision for schools, you'll see the reforms that have been attempted in Ontario schools in the 25 years since the Hall-Dennis report, the last comprehensive review of the entire educa-

tion system. Some were politically motivated, some were based on good research, while others were half-baked fads. Some worked to a certain degree, and others soon disappeared into never-never land. Together they demonstrate how complicated it is to effect change in a massive institution like Ontario's education system – after all, it probably directly involves half of this province's 10 million citizens. How difficult it is to know what will work and what won't, and what an imposition it all is on the teachers who must begin introducing the latest board or Ministry brainchild, too often with inadequate preparation or resources, when the previous ones hadn't even been fully absorbed, let alone evaluated.

To achieve any meaningful reforms to our learning system, we must help students to be able to learn more and better. To do so involves ensuring that the rest of society helps prepare students for school learning, and that teachers are fully equipped to do the rest. In a real sense, you'll see that almost all our recommendations are crafted to achieve these intertwined ends.

### **The purpose of schooling**

At the beginning of this section, we asked what we're entitled to expect from our schools. The first answer is that schools can't do everything, and certainly teachers can't do everything. On the contrary, they must do mainly what they are better equipped to do than any other part of our society, and leave others to do what they can best contribute. A second answer would be that schools must be part of a new, co-ordinated societal effort to raise our children with love, care, wisdom, responsibility, and a sense of justice.

It follows, then, that the primary purpose of schooling is not to train students for a particular job, or to turn out a product, or to make Ontario more competitive in a globalized economy, or to compensate for a broken family, or to instill worthy values that others have neglected. On the contrary, there is one thing above all that teachers are singularly equipped for. First and foremost, their purpose must be to ensure for all students – whatever



**Every change has its passionate advocates and its outraged antagonists. What seems unquestionable, however, is that no-one has come up with that one simple idea that will turn the whole thing around. That's because no simple solution exists.**

their future jobs or careers – high levels of what we've chosen to call literacies: building on basic reading, writing, and problem-solving skills to ever-increasing stages as well as ever-deepening degrees of understanding across a variety of subject areas. We believe, in no uncertain terms, that almost all students have the capacity to complete secondary school with a great deal more academic excellence, more rigorous analytic capacity, more genuine intellectual understanding, more power of thinking, reasoning, problem-solving, than is now generally the case.

If this goal is realized, we'll find ourselves with a generation of citizens who have learned how to learn – an attribute that just about everyone believes is necessary – and who may even have developed a love of learning. It should be the purpose of every human being involved in the learning process to create such a love of learning in every student he she or he works with. Of course we know perfectly well that this is easier said than done, but it is possible. It seems obvious to us that a love of learning will go far to motivate citizens to become life-long learners.

We also believe that along with these objectives, schools should help prepare students to become responsible citizens, to move from adolescence to adulthood, and from schooling to employment. The publicly funded education system has four components – English and French public, and English and French Catholic – and we recognize that each of them encourages the development of those values that are inherent in their respective heritage and tradition. But we remain convinced that every school must promote the development of basic moral values, such as a sense of caring and compassion, respect for the human person and anti-racism, a commitment to peace and non-violence, honesty, and justice. We don't dispute that it's the home that is most often the primary determinant of values. Finally, however, as we insist throughout this report, it's the mutually reinforcing efforts of home and school that we promote as the way

for optimal development both in the academic area and in the realm of values.

But if, as we stress, the primary responsibilities of teachers are the academic and intellectual growth of their students, schools themselves must be able to deal constructively with the many difficult non-academic needs and problems that our kids seem to be facing more and more. This issue will not disappear, and there's no point in pretending we can simply continue to add new responsibilities to already overburdened teachers. Not only can these kids not learn properly without serious assistance, but unless assisted we can count on them making learning more difficult for all other students. The community must become a partner with schools in creating a capacity to handle this problem; you'll find that we come back to this issue many times in the pages to come.

If we agree that schools are not adequately fulfilling these purposes, how must they change?

### **The complexity of change**

As we were writing this report, we were sent a story from a British newspaper, *The Independent*, reporting on differences between education reforms in Britain and France. "While John Major's government wants teachers to do more whole-class teaching," it tells us, "French ministers want them to pay more attention to individuals ... On



tests, the French are moving in the opposite direction from the British: from next year there will be no national tests and tests will be administered only to a sample of schools ... Again, while British ministers want teacher training to be more practical, the French are trying to ensure that their teachers know more theory." As one of our researchers put it, "Just flip a coin."

Here's another example. In our public consultations we found a widespread sense that Japan had an education system worthy of being considered a model for our own. Yet in Japan itself, we learned, there is a strong impetus for education reform. At the same time, we have accumulated reports from apparently knowledgeable and unbiased sources that disagree profoundly on the most basic truths about Japanese schools. Do they promote understanding or mere memorization? Are kids drilled like robots, or treated as thinking individuals? Are teachers creative and provocative, or deadly dull and indifferent? Do Japanese kids really graduate with a better education than our own, or have they just crammed and learned to play the game better? We have evidence that backs up every one of these propositions, however contradictory. (The only fact we're certain of is that although Japanese kids go to school for more days a year than ours, the amount of time they spend in classroom academic activities is actually no longer than our own.)

Everywhere in the developed world, education reform is rampant. We have carefully studied examples of jurisdictions that have introduced considerable changes in

recent years. Frankly, it's almost impossible to know what's worked and what hasn't. Every change has its passionate advocates and its outraged antagonists. What seems unquestionable, however, is that no-one has come up with that one simple idea that will turn the whole thing around. That's because no simple solution exists. If it did, we'd all be getting aboard with great enthusiasm and relief. You can't construct a school as if it were a business that manufactures widgets any more than you can manage a school that way. People aren't widgets. Human development and learning is an enormously complex undertaking that has no perfect model or easy-to-follow directions.

## **The reality of childhood**

Besides the controversy over so many education ideas, as the British-French disagreements vividly indicate, non-educational factors must be taken into account. Let's begin with children themselves, always the best starting point when we discuss schooling.

Would-be reformers need to keep in mind that young people are kids first, students second. As the long-time educator Des Dixon has wisely pointed out, "The mark of an authentic proposal for education reform offers a vision of the whole reality of childhood. School is a part-time job for most children, yet the school system sputters along pretending the main activity of children is attending school." We have tried to keep this useful perspective in mind. There are a thousand distractions, a thousand interests, anxieties, and needs, that compete insistently with schooling for the time and attention of young people: sports, watching TV, listening to music, maybe learning to play an instrument, video arcades, malls, glamour and sports magazines, or just hanging out. Even in schools, as teachers across the land can attest, they must compete for their students' interest and attention. Sports, dances, drugs, relationships, gangs, clubs, recess, the nearest convenience store, kids who've dropped out – not to say the rivalries among jocks, whiggers, brainers, skaters, alternatives, and all the rest of a complex youth







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culture – this is a variety and complexity that few adults ever fully grasp, or even seem to remember.

Young people as such may not have changed, but the world in which they operate certainly has. Kids have always yearned for good friends, good looks, and good times, but their lives are vastly more complicated today than they were in the past. Many of the values that are supposed to hold society together are no longer clear or universally supported. At the same time, the institutions that are supposed to inculcate these values – above all religious groups and the family – are often devalued and sometimes appear to have forfeited their responsibility.

Far more young people hold jobs, and work longer hours at them, than in the past. Far more seem anxious about their future job prospects than was true even a few years ago – a perfectly rational reaction to the severe recession and the disappearance of many job opportunities through technology, corporate restructuring, and continental trade. Every increase in university tuition fees is an incentive for kids from less affluent families to consider dropping out of high school. Active sexuality, besides the traditional consequence of unwanted pregnancies, now threatens to result in a deadly, uncontrollable disease. The very physical and ethnic diversity of young people challenges former certainties, as do the great changes that have taken place in the structure of the family itself. While two-parent families are still the most common by far, in many schools a third of the students

come from single-family homes. And even among the majority, families with two working parents are very much the rule, not the exception.

Too many kids are confronted by a litany of severe problems they are in general helpless to solve: some are beaten, some have an abused parent (usually the mother), some live in poverty, some have a physical or emotional disabilities, some are victims of racism, some are in contact with drugs, some are children of anxious immigrants with different cultural traditions and may be the products of violent foreign conflicts, and too many girls are sexually harassed – the list is long indeed.

We don't know exactly how many kids have one or more of these problems, but there are lots of them, and they cut across socio-economic strata and across cultures. Students bring them to school every day, and each one is a barrier to learning. A problem that attracted much attention in the months we were at work was the widespread fear that schools are unsafe for their students. So any school that doesn't try consciously to marshal all possible community resources to deal with the deficits that these young people carry is doing a grave disservice not just to them but also to those lucky enough not to have such problems; after all, their learning is disrupted if kids with problems aren't systematically helped. Any school that fails to recognize that the "whole reality of childhood" is rich and complex, and that school is only one portion of it, is looking for trouble. Any attempt to make schools better without recognizing the reality of kids' lives is doomed to failure. We hope we haven't made that mistake.

### **Our key recommendations**

With this context in mind, we had to decide how serious reform of the system could actually happen. Students have changed, teachers have changed, families have changed, technology has changed, and society has changed in a dozen different ways; how is it possible not to wonder whether the very heart and soul of schools must change accordingly?



**Four key strategic projects have the capability to change qualitatively the kind of schools, the kind of learning, and the kind of teaching that are at the heart of the education system.**

We regretfully concluded that the many dozens of discrete ideas that we heard in our public consultations – whether suggestions to teach international understanding, use more phonics, add math and science courses, give parents a greater role in running schools, and so on – would not be nearly sufficient to turn the vast educational enterprise around, whatever their individual merits. Piecemeal solutions to isolated problems do not, in the end, add up to a coherent framework for reform. We learned that for every complex problem there is an easy, black-and-white solution, and it is often as not wrong. On the other hand, we’ve also avoided like the plague all those big ideas whose meaning has given rise to such misunderstanding that they’ve been rendered quite useless – restructuring, site-based management, child-centred learning, constructivism, and the like. Such terms confuse rather than clarify.

It is true that we have much of considerable importance to say about the traditional education issues: what students should learn, how we know whether they’ve learned, how to improve their performance, who should make these decisions. These were the issues the government of Ontario asked us to examine and report on, and we have done so at considerable length.

We believe it’s absolutely essential that the progress of all students be monitored systematically and thoroughly from the very beginning of their school careers, with an eye to constant improvement both of the individual and the program. We believe the traditional basics do matter, that they must be learned by all kids at an early age, and be shown to have been learned. We believe the teaching of math and sciences needs serious updating. We believe smaller schools-within-schools make great sense. We believe every student should have a teacher who acts as a personal steward for several years in a row. We believe teachers and students should have more influence in how schools are run, and that parents must be welcomed by every school in the province and given thorough advice about how they can support their children’s learning. All these matters are treated in detail in the volumes of our report, and we’ll return to them briefly in this overview.

Yet when all was said and done, given the record of educational change around the world, we made the crucial decision that even major reforms in those conventional areas of education don’t go far enough in shaking up the entire system. Since, in our analysis, the real crisis in education is caused by large-scale societal changes, it seemed vital to us that our recommendations be on the same scale and of the same power as these outside forces. We need to forge a new system that is challenging and rigorous and develops students who can think, create, analyze, reason, debate, synthesize, understand, communicate, learn and keep learning. To this end, we concluded that several carefully chosen key intervention strategies were necessary to accelerate the process of change and reform, to act as engines of transformation, driving the changes to traditional educational matters that we are also recommending.

After a great deal of analysis, it seemed to us that, in particular, four key strategic projects have the capability to change qualitatively the kind of schools, the kind of learning, and the kind of teaching that are at the heart of the education system:

- an alliance between the school and its community to share the overall responsibility for raising our children and seeing to their best development;
- early childhood education, to maximize the potential of schooling for all kids;



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- the professionalization and continuing development of teachers, the single most important key to any possible improvement in the quality of schooling; and
- the use of computers and related technology to establish the relevance of formal schooling to the world outside of schools, and, with the help of teachers, to help young people learn to think in more creative, co-operative, sophisticated ways.

We're convinced that each of these four projects, by themselves and together, can so change the nature of the education enterprise that things will never be the same again. We devote a complete chapter to each of them in the main body of the report where we support this conviction, demonstrating how they work as engines to drive the momentum to large-scale reform. Here we can only summarize the main appeal of each of them.

**The first engine: A new kind of  
school-community alliance**

For some years, society has been dumping on our schools the responsibility to deal with whatever new problem or crisis has come along that can't easily be handled elsewhere. Then they are criticized for failing to educate our children properly. We are convinced that teachers – overwhelmed, overburdened, and ill prepared – can handle no more. Schools can't raise our children for us. They can't do everything by themselves. They can't cope with all the

deficits that kids bring to school and with the turbulent, unpredictable times we live in, and at the same time fulfil their main purpose of graduating students with high levels of intellectual competence.

That's why one of our key conclusions is that the entire community must share with its schools the responsibility for raising our children, and for their overall development. During our hearings, we were reminded repeatedly of a saying, apparently African, that it takes an entire village to raise a child. We've come to believe that not only is this notion true, but it's also indispensable if schools in the future are to do their jobs properly. And that future has already begun.

In our vision, schools must no longer be isolated, self-contained institutions, doing their own thing. Instead, they must become part of a network of many local or regional organizations, all inter-connected, and all dealing with the whole reality of childhood. It seems to us to make sense that schools become the physical centre for this network. Teachers can't be expected to do the jobs of trained psychologists, but trained psychologists can come to schools. Teachers can't suddenly become experts in violence prevention, but cops can come to schools. Teachers can't be expected to be artists, scientists, computer techies, social workers, musicians, fitness specialists, but all those who are can come to schools. This is not more pie-in-the-sky; we've known of artists and fitness experts from outside the system who have offered to do exactly that. The Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto has offered to work on music programs with Metro Toronto schools. Of course this wouldn't be a great boon to northern Ontario students, but the point is that every community has its own particular special resources that can become part of this network.

This concept of how a community raises its children is not original to us by any means, although despite lots of individual examples we cite, it's never been carried very far in practice. But we give it such profile here because of our certainty – and we don't hesitate to repeat ourselves – that if things continue along the present path, teachers



can't be expected to focus on their main responsibility of providing high-quality, high-level instruction. Schools are part of their communities, and the community includes its schools. Social agencies, community and religious organizations, local ministry offices, businesses and unions, and community colleges and universities all share the non-academic load that's been thrust on schools. With knowledge exploding before our eyes, it's ridiculous to expect schools to keep up with every kind of expertise without the aid of knowledgeable citizens in the community.

We explored several ways to implement this concept. We think every school should have a school-community council, led by the principal and comprising community residents, parents, teachers, and students, responsible for bringing appropriate community resources into the school to assume some of the obligations teachers now bear alone.

There must be a new kind of co-ordination at the local level of the many provincial government ministries and social service agencies that provide support services to children and their families. We call on the government at Queen's Park to ensure such co-ordination.

Everywhere in the province business people told us that schools must do better. Here's their chance to help that happen by offering family-friendly workplace policies, making it possible, for example, for employees to be able to visit their children's teachers during school hours.

Let's be frank about one of the implications of these recommendations. In the schools we envision, by no means would all educators be formally certified teachers and therefore members of one of the teachers' unions or federations. The fancy name for this is differentiated staffing, and we know full well that it's an idea that's met resistance at the union level in the past. We understand and are wholly sympathetic with the mandate of the unions to protect the legitimate job security and benefits of its members. But there's a principle even more overriding than this one: the interests of good teaching and good learning must always come first.

Most teacher union activists claim to believe in this principle, except when it seems to conflict with their union imperatives. But there's a contradiction in their position. Teachers came to us in droves to complain that they were impossibly overburdened. We say those burdens will only be lifted if they're shared by the entire community. We say that only through differential staffing can schools fulfil the multiplicity of responsibilities that are reluctantly theirs. It seems to us that the unions can't have it both ways. They can't complain of overload and then refuse to allow a solution to it. Shortly, we'll describe a series of steps to help teachers cope better in the classroom. But the first one is to relieve them of some of their non-academic duties so their main priority can be the one for which they entered the profession: to be excellent teachers. We can only hope that the unions co-operate for the sake of the students.

### **The second engine: Early childhood education**

Our report should be seen as a strong endorsement of the potential of universal public education. We see education as a public good in which all should share. And we believe that contact with the formal schooling system could profitably begin even sooner than it does. We have been impressed by a substantial amount of persuasive research that suggests that if kids began school a year earlier – at three years, instead of junior kindergarten at four, and full-time instead of half-time –



**Children who come through a carefully planned process of early education gain significantly in competence, coping skills, and (not least important) in positive attitudes towards learning.**

their future educational development would be positively affected. But since we know that some parents will be reluctant to send their children to school at that age, we recommend that although all boards should make these facilities available, attendance would be optional.

Good research has increasingly demonstrated that long before any child arrives at school, much learning has already taken place; just ask any parent. But the nature of that learning varies greatly; just ask any teacher. The kids who enter our schools for the first time often arrive from vastly different worlds of experience – worlds that profoundly affect their ability to learn in both positive and negative ways. They are raised in diverse family settings and nurtured by parents who, in most cases, are both breadwinners. They come from families where education is important and from families with little interest in education, from families where language and its use is part of the air children breathe to families struggling to break the shackles of illiteracy. It's our strong conviction that it's neither just nor reasonable to leave these crucial early educational influences to chance.

Yet another major phenomenon pushed us towards embracing early childhood education programs. If present trends continue, our children will in all too many cases bring to school with them the trauma of dysfunctional families wounded by poverty, unemployment, and often addiction. In May 1994, while we were in the midst of our deliberations, a report from the Metro Toronto

Social Planning Council set in stark terms the extent of the poverty problem: "Not since the depression of the 1930s have so many young families been at such risk of economic insecurity ..." We have known for years that children from poor families bring to school a host of difficulties that substantially interfere with their learning. Schools cannot solve the problem of poverty. But if they have the will, they have the capacity to minimize the consequences of poverty on learning and to decrease the other emotional baggage that burdens so many of today's children.

We're convinced that early childhood education significantly helps in providing a level playing field of opportunity and experience for every child, whatever her background.

According to the evidence we've seen – and it's all set out in detail in Chapter 7 of the report – children who come through a carefully planned process of early education gain significantly in competence, coping skills, and (not least important) in positive attitudes towards learning. Excellent education enhances their understanding of the value of formal learning while it seems to expand teachers' expectations of children's capacities. Most observers agree that teachers' expectations of their students are very nearly a self-fulfilling prophecy, so anything that demonstrates to teachers that they can realistically hold high expectations for all their students is to be devoutly desired.

Earlier schooling also has some important lessons for parents. It teaches them that individual attention paid to their kids by teachers is an invaluable asset, and creates an expectation that such personal involvement will remain a hallmark of schooling throughout their children's education. Of course this is not the case now. But it should be. Early education is an excellent place for such personal involvement to begin, and we have suggestions to make it happen.

There's also an abundance of research showing that parents' interest in their children's schooling is a powerful tool in kids' academic success; this is a major finding with



enormous potential for better learning. If teachers make parents feel comfortable about their children's schooling at this initial stage, it could well set the stage for on-going involvement. Of course there are many kids with only one parent and a few with none at all, and although that could mean they find little home interest in their school lives, for them there are, at least, compensating factors in early education. In fact, what's so exciting for us is that recent research demonstrates that both disadvantaged and advantaged kids benefit from high quality early schooling.

An earlier start means greater and more equal school readiness for children at age 6, when they get to Grade 1. Put another way, it removes barriers to learning at the earliest possible stage. That means a stronger start at basic literacy and numeracy, which we warmly applaud, and the prospect of building on that head start throughout the rest of their school years. There is heartening evidence as well that if young children with apparent learning disabilities receive proper educational attention early on, a significant number of them will avoid becoming special education students.

As you'll see, we build deliberately on the concept of school readiness by recommending more systematic and effective attention to early literacy in Grades 1 and 2, and a standard test of basic literacy for all students in Grade 3. As a result, we believe schools will be able to offer a virtual guarantee of basic literacy for every student by the end of Grade 3. In our curriculum for literacies, we show how to build on this foundation to the point that it's not unrealistic to hope that the 14-year-old learner a decade from now might well have the knowledge and skills of today's 15- or 16-year-old, and that far fewer remedial and special education programs would be needed.

### **The third engine: Teachers**

Teachers are our heroes. We believe they should be everyone's heroes. Anyone who has watched a teacher begin a day facing a group of kids who'd rather be anywhere in the world than sitting in that classroom

learning about something called geometry that they couldn't care less about understands only too well what a frustrating, thankless, enervating task these mortal women and men face so much of their working lives. In return, they feel unappreciated, disrespected, the focus of twisted media attacks, caught in an almost war-like situation not of their making. It's hardly an accident that so many teachers love talking about themselves as the front-line troops of the education system, the ones that are in the trenches each and every day. Is this a happy metaphor for schooling?

Yet just about all of us remember with love and gratitude those special teachers we encountered along the way who influenced our lives so greatly. They're still out there, the naturals, the born teachers, accomplishing miracles. We've seen teachers whose Grade 2 kids were writing real essays and happily learning about correct spelling, grammar and syntax in the process. We know of seven- and eight-year-olds who, under the guidance of a remarkable teacher, are having the times of their lives performing adaptations of Shakespeare, and gaining a lifelong love of the classics. We saw with our own eyes a group of young teenage boys – “hormone hoppers” to their savvy teacher – so engrossed in a computer project they were doing together that they ignored the lunch bell. We know there are teachers who bring alive to young women and men across Ontario the history of Lower Canada, the intricacies of calculus, the mysteries of space.



**Transforming schools,  
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**It's because of this  
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development as one  
of our four engines  
of change.**

We've learned of teachers who have saved kids in trouble from doing terrible damage to their lives, and who have spent time and energy persuading them to stay in school. We know of teachers who have given themselves to other troubled kids and ended up with heartache and frustration; that too is part of the reality.

It would be too good to be true to expect all teachers to be devoted, dedicated, and brilliant at their work. In fact, as their students told us in no uncertain terms, there are teachers who are uncommunicative, unresponsive, indifferent, mechanical, inflexible, and responsible to no one; some, they explained in a nice phrase, were retired on the job. We know all this from first-hand experience. How many teachers fall into these categories? Not many, yet too many. If we may borrow a phrase, one is too many. There is no excuse for bad teachers, and they shouldn't be permitted to work in our schools. For every student who falls through the cracks, a principal or teacher must be responsible. We hope the teachers' unions are able to share the singular priority of the right of our students to the best possible teaching – a right, frankly, that must always take priority over an inadequate teacher's right to permanent job security.

But as in all matters human, the large majority of teachers are neither exceptional nor hopeless. Most teachers say they enter the profession out of their concern for kids, and we believe it's true. From what we've observed and learned, we're confident that most Ontario teachers

are competent, caring, and committed; that they work conscientiously and hard; and that day in and day out, they do a good job. In fact, given the constant pressure they operate under, the seriousness of their responsibilities, the never-ending new obligations society foists on them and the never-ending new changes that boards or the Ministry impose on them, the anxiety about keeping up with their subject and with good practices that result from the explosion of knowledge both in their disciplines and in teaching methods – given all this, even the ordinary teacher seems heroic to us.

Transforming schools, as we insistently repeat, ultimately depends on teachers. No significant improvements are likely to take place without the active participation of teachers and other educators who actually create and sustain the conditions for learning in schools. All the educational policy changes and curriculum documents in the world will have little or no effect unless teachers use them in the classroom. All the system-wide testing will have no effect either, unless teachers use the data to improve and refine their programs and teaching methods. It's because of this indispensable role that we identified teacher development as one of our four engines of change. If educators increase their capacity for creating positive change in classrooms, working together to improve programs for all students, we have every reason to expect significant improvement in student learning.

But at this moment teachers are hardly equipped for this role, if indeed they believe in it. Neither are they equipped with the skills and knowledge to cope effectively with the strange new world in which they find themselves. We spent a great deal of time examining this problem, and we dedicate a substantial amount of our report to elaborating quite fully on our views. You'll see that Chapter 6 is called "What Is Teaching?," while we devote an entire volume, which we call *The Educators*, to a comprehensive review of what teachers, department heads, principals, and supervisory officers need to know to do their jobs effectively, and how they can best learn it.

What we have in mind is not exactly teacher education







In a 1987 federal government survey of 2000 students aged 15 to 24, 23% of high school students liked going to school; 23% said their courses were interesting; 32% said their school work was meaningful and important.

Sandro Contenta, *Rituals of Failure*, 1994

or training; continuing professional development is perhaps more precise. It is no easy thing to equip someone to take on the duties of today's teacher. Look at the significant changes in the demographic composition of the student body, and the impact of family poverty and children's emotional problems. Society has determined that children with special needs are to be increasingly integrated into regular classrooms. We already noted the changing economic and social contexts of education, and the increased curricular demands. With these dramatic changes, and all the many others we've referred to so far, it's obvious that teaching techniques from the past, supposing they were ever adequate, are no longer good enough for new and more challenging school contexts.

Neither are they remotely good enough for meeting new and more ambitious learning goals. Helping children master basic reading and writing skills is a critical first step, and every teacher of young children must be proficient at it. But it's not enough; the basics are simply the beginning of a long adventure in increasingly complex learning. Students must also learn to solve new problems, to think, to reason, and to apply their learning in a variety of contexts that are as yet unknown. If students must learn these, teachers must know how to teach them.

Teachers are, of necessity, at the forefront – maybe we should say the front line – of any and all curricular and organizational changes in schools. In 1993–94 alone, for

instance, on top of all their other responsibilities, teachers were dealing with the new common curriculum, and also, for the first time, teaching destreamed Grade 9 classes that include all ability and achievement levels. It takes professional commitment and real expertise to handle all these roles and assignments, which is why the proper preparation and support of this expert teaching force is critical. It is obvious to many, including us, that strengthened and more substantial preparation is absolutely necessary for teachers before they take on full responsibility for their own classrooms. But at least as important, however, are two other changes that are too frequently overlooked: first, a shift in the conditions of teachers' work and of their professional lives; and second, a more serious commitment to ongoing professional development of every teacher and principal in the entire system, both formal and informal.

We are by no means the first to note that few schools yet provide the kinds of working and learning environments that support such high-quality professional teaching; the image of the teacher, isolated behind the closed classroom door, has become close to a stereotype. It's only when teachers are continually learning and thinking about how to improve their practice that collectively they can create the optimal conditions for students' learning. We know this is easy to say for outsiders, who don't have to face the harsh realities of the daily school grind. But the goal is important enough that we must at least try to approach it.

What are we recommending? In general, our suggestions involve teachers having greater autonomy, but also greater accountability – or more responsibility, but also better support. What does this mean in practice? First, it seems to us that it is an insult to the job of teacher to believe it can be learned in one academic year at a university faculty of education, with perhaps five months of formal instruction and four months of practice teaching, as is presently the case. What may be most remarkable about the present school system is how many teachers



cope so well with such limited preparation. But it's time to stop pushing our luck.

We believe that the pre-service preparation program be lengthened to two years following the first undergraduate degree, and that schools and faculties of education both take responsibility for teaching aspiring teachers what they need to learn. Although (as we will explain in a moment) we leave it to specialists in the field to specify the content or format of this program, we do recommend a rigorous process for accrediting teacher preparation programs. Student teachers need longer blocks of time working in schools, but just as important, they need assistance in thinking critically about their work in schools, so that they can do more than merely replicate what they see. Like a pendulum, there's a movement away from the present practice – spending too much time in the faculties and not enough in actual classrooms – to the opposite extreme – trivializing formal instruction in the philosophy of education and pedagogical methodologies, and emphasizing classroom experience instead. In our view, this is one of those areas where a thoughtful balance between the two is clearly the sensible route to take.

There's a problem here, however. A look at the number of teachers suggests caution about relying primarily on pre-service teacher education as the instrument of renewal. There are more than 120,000 teachers in Ontario, but only some 3,000 new ones are hired each year, suggesting that depending on beginning teachers to renew the profession would be a very long, very slow process indeed. As well, there are limits to what can be accomplished in a pre-service program. In the long term, it is more important that teachers continue to develop throughout their careers. The issue is how to foster, if not ensure, such continual improvement, which cannot flourish unless time and resources are committed to it.

We became convinced that on-going professional learning must become part and parcel of a teaching career. It seems impossible to do the job effectively otherwise. We feel so strongly about this that we are recommending that participation in professional development

be mandatory for all educators, and that continuing certification be contingent on such participation.

As we see it, PD, as it's universally known, should be woven into the life of schools as much as possible, rather than grafted on as something artificial that must be done. In other words, the ideal professional development is teachers working together to plan programs, discuss teaching methods, puzzle over how best to teach hard-to-reach students, assess the strengths and weaknesses of their wards, elicit parental views, develop tools to assess student learning, and improve their reporting to parents. As they work on these issues, teachers will go to workshops, draw on experts, discuss with each other, reflect on their own experiences, and experiment with their new knowledge.

Our views here reflect our confidence in the professionalism of the teaching profession. And we take this position to its logical conclusion. Our conviction is that teaching should be a self-governing profession, with greater responsibility and greater autonomy for teachers. Our recommendation is that teachers would collectively, through a College of Teachers, set the standards for entry into teaching, maintain a register of those licensed to teach in Ontario, and determine the criteria for accrediting (or recognizing) teacher education programs, whether that means pre-service preparation or the on-going professional development for practising teachers which we described a moment ago.



While the membership of the college must include representatives of the public, presumably appointed by the government, a majority of the members would be teachers, directly elected by all certified teachers in the province. It's crucial to our plan that no one interest group has control of the college, and that all members put aside their own particular perspectives in the service of maintaining the highest professional standards. In the decisions about structure and membership of the college, it must be clear that the College of Teachers will be completely separate from and independent of the teachers' federations, whose functions, although occasionally overlapping, are in fact quite distinct.

Every aspect of the education system needs to be monitored regularly. That includes teachers. Evaluation of the performance of teachers and other educators in the system has several purposes. Performance should be monitored to ensure that standards are kept up and staff is performing satisfactorily. This is part and parcel of being accountable. Perhaps even more important is assessing performance, and giving feedback, so people can continue to get better at what they do. Finally, schools must assess performance to identify and deal with staff members who, for whatever reason, are ineffective.

No one source of information offers definitive answers to how well someone is teaching. We need a variety of indicators, including observation and reporting by principals or vice-principals; measures of student learning,

particularly progress over time; and feedback from students and parents. That's why we recommend that school boards develop fair and systematic ways of eliciting the views of students and parents about the learning climate of schools and classrooms, that information about performance appraisal systems be publicly accessible, and that principals and supervisory officers be accountable for following up and dealing with unsatisfactory teaching behaviour.

Teachers, principals, supervisory officers, and senior school-board administrators are key to implementing our other engines for change as well. If the community alliances we advocate actually happen, teachers will find that a substantial portion of their non-academic responsibilities are lifted, and they can focus on the intellectual development of all their students. Unless teachers are comfortable with electronic technology, and unless they develop the necessary skills, they won't be able to realize the potential of computers as teaching tools. Community alliances need the support of teachers and administrators, who in turn need to further develop their skills in working effectively with those beyond the school, and with volunteers and other professionals in the community. Early childhood education programs require well-prepared teachers able to work with children and their families to ensure that all children enter Grade 1 with a high chance of success. Put all these ingredients together, working towards the same exciting learning goals, and together we have a chance to fashion something new and dramatic in the world of learning.

#### **The fourth engine: Information technology**

Being on this Commission has been an almost unlimited learning experience for all of us, and perhaps the least expected discovery that we made concerns the remarkable potential that information technology – computers and related telecommunications in particular – has for revolutionizing teaching and learning in the most positive and exciting ways imaginable. We stress the word *potential*. Some of the largest corporate interests in North America



**Both students and teachers would be more receptive to the entire learning process if schools designed much of their classroom teaching and learning strategies around information technology.**

are gearing up to computerize the continent's schools over the next few years. The only question is whether technology is in the saddle riding humankind, or whether we're capable of harnessing it in the most constructive way possible.

After a great deal of exploration and observation, we've actually come to believe that both students and teachers would be more receptive to the entire learning process if schools designed much of their classroom teaching and learning strategies around information technology – computers linked to a modem and telephone line or cable, CD-ROM players, and other devices. But as we've already said earlier, the new technology is not a substitute for teachers. On the contrary, its intelligent use depends on the guidance of thoroughly prepared teachers with the assistance of community specialists. Under these circumstances, we are convinced it's capable of re-shaping the traditional nature of learning and teaching. While Chapter 13 sets out at considerable length the possibilities and the limits of the new technology, this section will spell out briefly the reasons for our enthusiasm and optimism, and the steps we believe necessary to avoid the real pitfalls ahead.

In the first place, as one ardent techie put it so well, "Technology stands out in our classrooms as a symbol to teachers, parents and students that schooling can and will change, that classrooms may have some bearing on the 21st century after all." Computers are the evidence that schools have some real connection to the outside world, that schools matter, that they're relevant, that they're part of the whole reality of childhood. This is not a contribution to be scorned. In a world of Super Nintendos and kids who can set their families' VCR clocks, where half of all homes will soon have their own computers, it is only too easy for traditional schools to seem beside the point. That's what UNESCO means when it reports that "Teachers armed with chalk and a blackboard are no match for these powerful new media." Computer literacy is already the new basic, something some of us old-timers may still find breathtaking but that young people simply take for

granted. Motivating students is a key to better learning; poorly motivated students, of whom our system has an abundance, are poor students. Information technology has the potential to be a major motivator.

Secondly, the new technologies, when used properly, have the capacity to offer the first qualitative change in the potential nature of learning since books evolved half a millennium ago and structured the education process since. From schools and school districts in Ontario that we have visited, as well as in other jurisdictions where significant experiments with information technology have been taking place, there has emerged an accumulation of credible reports that describe a transformation of the nature of learning for kids and instruction for teachers. Remarkably, similar language is used by all of them. We'll let several of them speak for themselves, because they go a long way towards explaining our enthusiasm.

"Significant change," according to one report on a high school project, was observed in the way students thought and worked. Comparing students in conventional schools with those in a carefully planned and structured information technology program, the greatest difference was found in the way the latter "organized for and accomplished their work. Routinely they employed inquiry, collaborative, technological and problem-solving skills uncommon to the graduates of traditional high school programs." At the same time, teachers "began teaming, working across disciplines, and modifying



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school schedules to accommodate ambitious class projects,” while in elementary schools, “traditional recitation and seat work have been gradually balanced with inter-disciplinary, project-based instruction that integrates the same advanced technologies in use in high school.”

These descriptions will seem wildly exaggerated to some of you. But we have seen for ourselves examples of exactly these phenomena in schools here in Ontario. The main report discusses them further.

Other findings also sound almost too good to be true. As a B.C. study concluded, “With the tools of technology, students can dramatically raise knowledge levels, learn problem-solving techniques, develop the skills required to manage massive amounts of information, analyze concepts from several different perspectives, and develop the hard-to-quantify higher-order analytic and critical thinking skills that are required in the global marketplace.”

The evidence clearly suggests that every student, of both genders and all backgrounds, can benefit substantially from the new technology. “‘Average’ students grew as involved and interested as ‘gifted’ students,” one experiment reported. Another teacher noted that using technology in her classes had led “All students, from gifted to special education, to take control of their learning.” The Dutch experience indicated that “the computer will never replace the teacher ... it will change the role of the

teacher to increase the time and attention that can be spent on groups of pupils who are often neglected at present – exceptionally gifted and pupils who lag behind.” That’s largely because the technology allows for a far greater individualization of the teaching process than is now possible in the real world of large classrooms.

We see information technology not as threat to teachers, but as a multi-faceted new resource. Computers are not teachers; they’re teacher aides. We agree with those who told us that “apart from funding, adequate teacher preparation is probably the most important determinant of the success” of information technology. A heartening number of Ontario teachers already are comfortable with computers, but many are not. Of course we don’t expect a hundred thousand teachers suddenly to be transformed from techno-peasants to techno-pedagogues, but there’s no reason why all of them can’t learn to be modestly competent within the world of technology, provided that appropriate time and assistance are made available for proper preparation. With such in-service professional development, combined with adequate training during the two initial years of teacher education, we could realistically have a teaching force ready to exploit the great promise of information technology within a few years.

There are other valuable contributions that this technology can play. Using computers for assessing students’ performance, as we show in Chapter 13, can give students more control over their own learning, teachers and parents more information on the quality of that learning, and even lead to more and better learning by students. It can help teachers create networks of collaboration and new models of professional development. And it can help parents access information about their children’s schooling, like tonight’s homework, via telephone or via computer and modem. All of this is spelled out at greater length in the main report.

There are cautions that must be noted. We take for granted that kids from less-advantaged homes are less likely to have home computers than those from better-off families. This is why it’s so important that schools are



able to compensate those who don't. As things stand now, children from higher socio-economic levels generally feel more comfortable in the school milieu than poorer kids. If the latter lacked computer literacy, on top of their other disadvantages, the school system would be even more unfair than it is now. There are also preliminary indications that girls appear to be less interested in the world of computer technology than boys; certainly the Internet is a largely male domain. Properly prepared teachers will be needed to ensure that girls don't cheat themselves of this invaluable learning opportunity.

There is a significant job of co-ordination that we call on the Ministry of Education and Training to play in the entire realm of information technology in our schools. We are also concerned about the availability of high-quality education software. While the technology behind software may be universal, we believe Canadian students still need content that is geared to and based on Canadian realities and culture. And naturally, the major problem is assuring that every school in the province is adequately supplied with both the hardware and software to make information technology a genuine learning tool. Frankly, we can't imagine this to be possible without some co-operative venture between governments and the business community.

### **The four engines: Summing up**

We don't want to minimize or disguise the challenge we're delivering. If the education system of the future is to meet the great expectations that we, like everyone else, hold for it, these four strategic projects need to be in place. Together they constitute a set of dynamic and interlocking forces with the synergy to drive the reconstruction of the present system. While each is a powerful transformational force in its own right, interacting with each other powerfully expands the capacity of each to effect real change.

Children who don't have deeply motivated, caring, trained, experienced teachers are limited in what they can learn. Teachers whose students are not predisposed to

learn, who don't embrace school from the beginning as a welcome part of their lives, are limited in what they can teach. Schools with strategies that ignore the new information technologies are limited in their ability to make knowledge accessible and themselves relevant and interesting to this generation of young people. And schools that aren't organically connected to the families, businesses, arts and music communities, and the health and social agencies around them are limited in their ability to cope with the needs of their students.

Information technology and teachers are mutually dependent. Information technology depends on the community if it is to materialize in all schools, and schools will need experts in the community to work with teachers in using it to its fullest capacity. If we're right that early childhood education builds on and formally fosters children's early development as learners, as well as predisposing them to the idea of learning, they'll be open to the challenge offered by teachers with high expectations of them. Teachers will welcome the relief of having community members share with them the non-academic burdens of their students, and joining with them in enhancing even the teaching of some academic subjects. And they will learn to understand that the best teaching aide any teacher can have is the student's family, and will come to act on the assumption that the family is an integral part of a student's school life.



**We don't expect any of the engines to be implemented tomorrow.**

**But there's no good reason why each can't begin tomorrow and that we can't get the change process rolling immediately.**

We are not as unrealistic as some of these assertions must make us sound. We know perfectly well that what we're prescribing won't happen easily. We've spent a good deal of time learning about the complicated process of large-scale change. Each of our four engines is a complex, long-term project that must be introduced thoughtfully and systematically. Finding adequate funding is an issue we don't minimize, and we address it in the final chapter of our report on implementing our recommendations.

That's why we don't expect any of the engines to be implemented tomorrow. But there's no good reason why each can't begin tomorrow and that we can't get the change process rolling immediately. In fact significant initiatives can be taken without waiting for marching orders from the Ministry of Education and Training. Parents, teachers, principals, trustees and administrators, universities and faculties of education, and business people and community agencies could all begin their parts in the re-invention of Ontario schooling with little delay. Ironically, it's probably only the students who need permission to move ahead.

It seems to us that there exist a few overarching obstacles to a better learning system: alienated, distracted, passive youngsters; isolated, over-burdened, insufficiently prepared and insufficiently appreciated teachers; massive buildings that vividly reflect the way schools are cut off from both the big world outside their doors and the human communities around them. That's why we

concluded that we needed some dramatic means to meet these obstacles head on before we could expect that our various ideas for changing the curriculum would matter very much. The four engines, we hope, are the blasting powder that the system needs to open itself to further change. What those changes ought to be we'll deal with next.

### **How learning happens**

Let's lay it on the table: This Commission has an unshakeable bias which influences every aspect of our work. All of us happen to love learning. All of us love books. We love the thrill of discovering new writers and new ideas. We love wonderfully written literature and provocatively written essays. We love to know and are frustrated by our inability to know more than we do. We love to debate, to discuss, to argue, to learn from each other and from those we meet. And nothing would satisfy us more, and contribute more to the education of our children and the well-being of our country, than if schools could play a greater role in instilling this love of learning into every student who goes through the system.

This was the starting point for our re-assessment of what goes on in the classrooms of this province at every level. We knew that we wanted our students, from the earliest years in school right through to graduation, to master an enriched and challenging curriculum. We also knew that this new curriculum for literacies, as we decided to name it, had to be accompanied by improved, continual assessment methods, with feedback carefully designed to be used to improve the performance of both the individual student and the system itself. So what we had to do was to absorb as much as we could about the nature of learning, about child and adolescent development, about effective teaching, and about the best methods of assessment.

We've already discussed good teachers in our section on teachers as one of our four intervention strategies. Here we'll give just a taste of Chapter 5 of the main report, "What Is Learning?"







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It doesn't take long to know what a positive learning atmosphere is. When you enter a new school, it often takes little time to sense if it's one where kids count, are cared about and are ready to learn. The same is true when you enter a real learning classroom: you can almost feel the excitement, the dynamics, the activity, the interactions, the energy between students and teacher and among the students themselves. Nor does it take long to discover what learning is not: it's not just listening and memorizing, and it's certainly not regurgitation. Teaching is not just telling, knowledge is not just facts, learning is not just recall, although some telling, some facts, and some recall are obviously necessary. It's certainly not the teacher at the front of the room pouring hundreds of bits of data down the throats of a roomful of passive students.

In fact learning happens to each of us all the time, wherever we are; the question is what we learn, and what we understand of what we are taught. We are even capable of learning from our mistakes, and teachers must use kids' mistakes as opportunities for learning, not as excuses for punishment.

We all have to practise what we learn to absorb it thoroughly, but the best practice isn't mechanical. As good teachers know, you don't write out French verbs twenty times a day, you write a letter to a friend in Quebec about staying part of Canada. In every field, kids learn by seeing the usefulness or relevance of a subject, whether grammar, geometry or Shakespeare. Poor Will!

No individual got a rougher ride from the students we spoke to than old Will Shakespeare. It seemed clear enough to us that no-one took the trouble to explain to most of them why Shakespeare is perhaps the greatest English-language writer of all time instead of a long-dead Englishman who uses funny language and is often very difficult to understand.

We learn when we get one-on-one attention, and we learn from each other, too. That's why teacher-student dialogue is enormously important, as is working in pairs and in groups, and peer and cross-age tutoring. All of these techniques have been demonstrated time and again to be invaluable learning tools, which is why we believe that one of the key literacies should include group skills and inter-personal skills. But none of these skills can be learned or productively practised without careful teacher monitoring. Putting kids in a group to do a project without careful instruction and on-going guidance, and leaving them entirely to their own devices is hardly a recipe for successful learning.

Motivation to learn is obviously very helpful, but we need to be motivated by something more than direct rewards or instant gratification. The best teaching finds ways to motivate kids to want to know, to want to figure things out for themselves, to want to be able to explain things. As we've already explained, with proper guidance, computers have been shown to be great motivators for many students to work independently or in small groups, and to want to solve problems on their own.

But there's a real problem in our system at the high school level for the majority of young women and men who are unlikely to go on to university. High schools are clearly geared for the university bound, as they've always been, creating a real crisis of confidence and motivation for the rest. Our ideas for re-shaping high schools revolve around our attempts to provide a serious, purposeful education for every student, regardless of his or her post-high school destination.

If kids feel the subject, or even the school, has nothing much to do with their lives or what matters to them,



**We come now to the  
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system looked like.**

they'll see little point in learning and probably won't. That's one of the reasons why we talk a lot about inclusive curriculum, in which all kids can see a part of themselves, whatever their backgrounds or gender.

Finally – as we crunch a major topic into a couple of pages – if kids feel defeated, they give up. For reasons we don't entirely understand, there's a lot of mockery of attempts by schools to enhance their students' self-esteem. That doesn't mean we think kids should just advance through the system regardless of whether they learn anything or not; we unequivocally do not. But it's common sense, as well as provable, that like anyone else, kids who feel they're hopeless failures conclude that they'll never succeed and quit trying. This is one of the great self-fulfilling prophecies in the world of education, like living up – or down – to their teachers' expectations. It should be crystal clear to all by now that we want every student to get a rigorous and enriching education. No-one should graduate without it. But special attention must be paid to students who do poorly, to ensure they get all the extra assistance they need. As we see it, self-esteem may well come from achievement, and achievement depends on self-esteem. That's how a lot of learning happens.

**The learning system:  
Building a curriculum of literacies**

We come now to the heart of our report: our vision of what we wish the entire learning system looked like. Assuming our four engines functioned to open the system in the way we've described, what follows is our newly transformed system in action. Perhaps we'd better repeat that this description is of an ideal system, some may even say a utopian one. But so far we've tried to show that we're neither dreamy idealists nor naive utopians. We know the system won't change easily. We know the reality of student and school life. But we also know that the need for change is great.

We also know what could be possible. After all, almost everything we recommend is actually happening some-

where in Ontario at this time. So our understanding of how good teaching and learning happens, of how fundamental change takes place, of the kind of reforms that would lead to the kind of learning system we envision, convinces us that we dare not recommend anything inferior to the model we describe in Volume II. It is our curriculum for literacies, using the term curriculum to mean not just course content but, in the larger sense, to include the entire life of a school.

As we've tried to make clear, the curriculum we favour is based on two firm convictions. First, we believe that every student can and should learn more in school, that he or she can and should acquire a greater depth of understanding and an ability to apply critical and creative thinking to what he or she learns. Secondly, we are convinced that all parts of the learning system – including the performance of both students and teachers – need to be assessed more frequently and more usefully, so that individual teaching and learning, as well as the system as a whole, can be continuously improved. Once these goals became clear to us, the question, of course, was how to achieve them. This is what we explain fully in Volumes II and III, and we're frankly concerned that we can't adequately capture the complexity and logic of those large sections in this brief summary. Obviously we hope readers will be inspired to move beyond these few pages to the two volumes themselves.



Equally important, we see basic literacy, even the new basics, as simply the beginning of real learning. Our notion has every student building on these fundamental blocks, as the system takes them year by year to accelerating levels of skills, knowledge, and understanding. But right from the start, all learning should include meaning and context, besides mechanics, and we consider learning to think to be one of the most basic skills.

The vision of curriculum we ended up with is a very broad one. It begins with the traditional, and we think very proper, concern for acquisition of essential foundation skills – which have always meant literacy and numeracy, have long included scientific thinking, and now, we strongly believe, these skills also must include computer literacy, the skills of working and learning with and from others, and an attitude of concern and respect for others. As you see, these skills include subjects in their own right, and also ways of learning to learn and think. Some call them the new basics, and we agree that's a useful term.

Beyond these foundation areas come the core subjects, areas in which every Ontario school child must have solid grounding: geography, history, international languages, the often-neglected arts, fitness and health education, and career education. As we pointed out earlier, it could be a great learning experience if community experts worked with schools in several of these core subjects, as we know they've offered to do in a number of centres.

But from the beginning we've talked about more than the traditional curriculum; in fact, we have talked about more than the program of schools. In the first place, our discussion and recommendations are directed at understanding and improving the learning system as an integrated whole, a system that we see stretching not only beyond the individual classroom walls but beyond the school walls.

Equally important, we see basic literacy, even the new basics, as simply the beginning of real learning. Our notion has every student building on these fundamental blocks, as the system takes them year by year to accelerating levels of skills, knowledge, and understanding. But right from the start, all learning should include meaning and context, besides mechanics, and we consider learning to think to be one of the most basic skills.

That's what we mean when we speak of a curriculum for literacies, rather than simply literacy. This is the reason we are sympathetic to the attempt in the common curriculum to have subjects taught in a more integrated manner; after all, outside of schools and universities, knowledge is rarely ever compartmentalized into isolated boxes called physics or geography. We encourage experimentation with this kind of subject integration beyond Grade 9 as well, and worry that rigid departmental lines in high schools, combined with universities determined to fit graduates into their traditional disciplines, may constrain progress in this area.

For the same reason, we're persuaded that there are more intellectually effective ways to teach math and science than are now mostly the case. Many people came to us to plead for more math and science to be taught in our schools. We've concluded that the greater priority is for them to be taught better. With the knowledge explosion, which even the greatest scientists and mathematicians in the world can't begin to keep up with, we need to teach our children more thoughtfully.

Math educators, for example, tell us that students need to see how mathematical ideas are related, that math must be seen as something beyond the manipulation of numbers. Instead of seeing the subject as consisting of many different discrete strands, students need to broaden their perspective to view math as an integrated whole, and to recognize its usefulness both inside and outside of school. In much the same way, science educators are recommending an emphasis, not on lists of facts that have little meaning and won't be remembered, but on a smaller number of concepts, patterns, and connections.



**We begin our discussion  
of learning at the  
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discussion of the school  
curriculum at age 3.**

Both groups are calling for the focus to be on problem-solving, application, and understanding – in other words, what we call the literacies. (We might add here that there are some impressive gender-fair teaching practices in math and science, which also happen to be effective for all students.)

**The young learner**

Traditionally, discussions of curriculum begin with the curriculum of Grade 1; sometimes they include kindergarten. Our discussion of the learning system begins at birth, and with children's first teachers – their parents. And we hope that, throughout the hundreds of pages and dozens of recommendations in our report, it is clear to our readers that we've tried never to lose sight of those first, most important teachers, and how deep, lasting and central their influence is on the learners. Children without parents, or without families who involve themselves in their children's schooling, are without question at a great disadvantage in doing well at school.

Many of our recommendations stress the necessity of increasing knowledge and communication in both directions between home and school, and of increasing the sharing of information and authority between the two. We want parents to know what children can and should be expected to learn at every age and stage in their development for two reasons: first, so parents can be effective as educators in their own right; and second, so they can be effective as emissaries and advocates for their children at school. In both roles, it is in the children's interest as learners that their parents be both well-informed and influential. That's why we speak of the need for parents to be informed and aware of what the curriculum is, what students are expected to learn (usually called expected learning outcomes), and what standards of achievement are considered acceptable in foundation and in core subjects.

Our recommendations for building expertise for teachers in assessment are also designed to improve teaching and learning, and to make more information

available to parents and the public about what's being taught and learned. The same is true of our recommendations concerning system-wide curriculum reviews, and of our recommendation that a standardized and informative report card (the Ontario Student Achievement Report) be adopted by all schools.

We begin our discussion of learning at the beginning, at birth; and we begin our discussion of the school curriculum at age 3. You'll recall that one of the four engines that we think will drive the process of transformation is early childhood education, which we discussed at some length earlier in this summary. We've recommended strongly that all boards make full-time schooling available to parents who wish it for every child across Ontario, beginning at age 3. Let's be clear: we're not speaking of child care, but of a carefully structured enterprise that combines an introduction to learning, often through play, with high quality education. While this is routine in some countries, most famously France, we're aware that some may consider this idea either an unwarranted invasion of the family's right and responsibility to raise its very young children, or an unaffordable luxury too expensive to provide universally, if at all.

We see it differently. The evidence we've reviewed of the effectiveness of such programs, combined with the significant number of households at all socio-economic levels where positive family responsibilities are not met effectively, tells us that we can't afford not to have them.



## **There is no good reason why almost all children should not have mastered the basic literacy skills before the end of Grade 3.**

Canadian children are in school longer than most others, and we spend very significant sums of money on remedial and special education programs which are too often ineffective. In spite of these expenditures and in spite of these programs – of which we as Canadians are rightfully proud – the overall achievement level of our students is not outstanding. And while many children get an excellent public education in Ontario, it is still true that only a minority achieve what can be called high-level literacy; that a significant minority doesn't make it through high school; and that, among some disadvantaged groups, that minority comes perilously close to, or even becomes, the majority.

We want more children to be better educated, and we want the irreplaceable asset of an excellent education to be owned equally by all of our children; we believe that most people in Ontario share this ideal. Excellent early childhood education is one big step towards that goal, as we've already pointed out. Among the many reasons why this has been shown to be true are two central ones we'll emphasize here. First, early childhood education seems to predispose children to have a more positive view of schooling and of formal learning. Secondly, from infancy children are acquiring ideas about cause and effect, about comparison and contrast, about quantity – in short, about the most fundamental building blocks of thinking and learning – and by the time they are three years old,

knowledgeable, skilled and caring teachers can make a real difference for them.

Beginning school earlier advantages all children. But the advantage can be lost if the emphasis on teaching and monitoring the acquisition of foundation skills, especially language skills, isn't maintained throughout the whole of elementary and secondary education, and especially during the first three years of compulsory schooling. We take the position that there is no good reason why almost all children should not have mastered the basic literacy skills before the end of Grade 3 and should be able to demonstrate it. Schools should offer society an early literacy guarantee for almost every child that completes Grade 3. That's why, you may remember, we call for a universal literacy test (as well as a numeracy test) at that stage, with the understanding that children who are having problems will have had serious support in the preceding year or two.

Of course some kids, unhappily, will always have special needs. While we know that many children will continue to need support throughout the common curriculum years (Grades 1 through 9), and that some individual learning difficulties require ongoing special attention, there is good evidence that early education and early help will prevent an enormous amount of frustration and suffering. It is the first essential step that the education system can take towards a better-educated citizenry.

We stress continuity. This seems to us a very important matter. Children pass through teacher after teacher, class after class, and school after school, from the early years until the end of secondary school. But, as their parents know, they are the same people, and while their interests and aptitudes grow and change, their singularity and consistency is apparent almost from birth. It's very difficult for teachers or schools to have such a comprehensive view of a student, but unless we can do better than we do now, students will remain too undifferentiated and their education too fragmented and too discontinuous, with consequences for the individual and the



system that are at least very wasteful in terms of talent and fulfilment, and at worst truly destructive.

To improve continuity for students, we've recommended that from the beginning of their compulsory schooling in Grade 1, every child in the system be assigned one person in the school responsible for knowing the child and her record. As year succeeds year, and teacher succeeds teacher, there should always be someone who is aware of whether that child is progressing at a normal rate, who makes certain that each new teacher has a good idea of her strengths and needs, and who can speak to the parents as an informed and concerned representative of the school.

At a later point in the system schools become more specialized, children have several different subject teachers, and teachers have far more students than they can know well individually. At that stage we've recommended that this case-management function become much more personal and hands-on. All students should have a teacher who acts as an advisor, someone who not only remains aware of their overall progress but who actually meets with them regularly, and with their parents at least twice annually, and who assists them with educational and career planning in an informal but informed way.

Both to facilitate and record this process, we recommend something we call the cumulative educational plan (CEP). This is a planning tool for each student that would include a systematic record of her progress from Grade 7 on. As we see it, it would offer a perspective on the growth and development of each student in a way that's never been done before. It would allow parents, the students themselves, and successive generations of teachers to have real and unprecedented insight into each child's progress, talents, interests, and problems as she advances through the system.

It would also be a comprehensive record, because as we already said, we don't believe it makes sense for schools to ignore what students are learning outside of school and the interests they're developing. We've made much in this section of the report of community-based career aware-

ness, a concept that means that the whole community is and should be used as a child's school, and that schools must act accordingly. The curriculum must take students out of the classroom, by foot and by computer; and the school must insist that the resources of the community become the resources of the learning system for students. That's why we include a community career co-ordinator for the younger grades, and a career education specialist for the older ones, and put considerable emphasis on the continuity of career education from beginning to end. We don't mean that schools should train kids for a particular job, or panic them about being prepared for that ruthlessly competitive, globalized economy which so many people continually warned us about. But schools should make students aware of their special talents and capacities, and of the career choices that might be most appropriate for those skills.

We expect the CEP to include information on what students are learning in the community that has implications for their school program and for their futures. A concrete example is international languages, where community resources often exceed school resources: many children in Ontario develop fluency and literacy in international languages outside of school. Surely such knowledge should become part of their record. Young people should be encouraged to be tested in international languages in which they have competence when they reach Grade 10, and should receive both advanced place-



**We believe that a common curriculum for all Ontario students should take some 90 percent of the learning agenda from Grades 1 through 9.**

ment and credits toward their diploma for that knowledge. We see this kind of encouragement of learning, wherever it happens, as enriching the community as well as the individual.

As soon as we began to consider the curriculum to be more than what's taught in classrooms, we began to appreciate the advantages, as well as the necessity, of a certain amount of flexibility in the learning system. Although we believe that a common curriculum for all Ontario students should take some 90 percent of the learning agenda from Grades 1 through 9, we think that 10 percent of the curriculum should be available for definition at the school level. Depending on the physical environment, the geography of the school and community, its social environment, and its human geography, a school may decide to put a special focus on an environmental study project, on a social or economic history project, or on some other worthwhile endeavour that can enhance students' knowledge and skills and perhaps also benefit the larger community.

At the individual level, flexibility in what's learned, and at what pace, has always been necessary, just as individual variation has always been inevitable. But for many reasons it's been difficult for schools to provide the necessary flexibility, and it will continue to be difficult. Any system that tries to provide for everyone will have difficulty in providing for those who are farthest from the

average. Yet we firmly believe it's possible to do better and extremely important to try. As we emphasized earlier, computer technology opens up new possibilities for individualizing students' learning programs. In the report itself, we draw attention to a few schools that have made real efforts to diminish the lock-step nature of learning by, for example, allowing students to use the whole 12-month calendar, or more or even much less, rather than insisting that learning comes in packages of ten months only.

Similarly, we favour more use of all the techniques that make it easier for students to learn at the pace that makes most sense for them. For students who are capable of moving faster in a subject, there could be acceleration: finishing math in five months instead of ten, for example, or demonstrating through a challenge exam that she can move directly from Grade 9 to Grade 11 math. Similarly, within the common curriculum a Grade five could be taking Grade 6 math.

In the same way, a student who needs more time or help, or both, should get them at once, intensively, and if possible should not be kept out of her regular classroom. The emphasis is on catching up quickly. Her extra time should be in addition to regular learning time, not instead of it. We know this is an area that requires greater skill and greater will from educators, and we've urged the Minister of Education and Training to provide leadership and support for those who are willing to work at developing models and strategies to increase flexibility for learners.

In fact flexibility in general seems to us the best way to encourage responsibility and creativity in the learning system – so long as the goals and principles are clearly understood and widely shared. Our recommendations stress clarity about ends and flexibility about means. That's why we say that teachers and parents must have clarity about intended learning outcomes and standards, and about the essential components of a course, whether it's Grade 7 math or Grade 11 geography.







## **Our recommendations stress clarity about ends and flexibility about means.**

In our view, the principles we've emphasized – continuity, stewardship, flexibility for learners, learning without walls – are tremendously important everywhere. But we also believe there are as many ways of teaching an excellent Grade 7 math or Grade 11 art course as there are excellent math and art teachers; and as many ways of building strong relationships among students, teachers, parents, and the community on behalf of learning as there are caring and committed professionals and parents. Frankly, far too many of the disputes that have divided people, about school reform are about means, not ends, and we've found the extremes on both sides to be less than helpful. In most of these cases – the phonics versus whole-language debate is a good example – it appears that a position between the extremes, or incorporating the extremes, often represents the most effective strategy.

That's why we believe that much good can be achieved by offering teachers, parents, and volunteers the training and the opportunity to work together to come up with their own strategies for supporting shared principles, in ways that will work in their particular schools and in their communities.

### **The years of specialization**

The same principles that we have developed and discussed in talking about younger learners apply to older ones as well. Teenagers may be less enthusiastic about

their families intervening in their school lives, but the fact remains they need well-informed parents who are on comfortable terms with their teachers; they continue to need a teacher who knows them and acts on their behalf; and they continue to need flexibility in learning time. But, in addition, as our children pass beyond the age of the common curriculum, when all of them are meant to be acquiring that bank of literacies they need – knowledge and essential thinking and learning skills – they must be given opportunities for making choices based on what they've learned about themselves and the world. In the learning system we envision, by the time students reach Grade 10 many of them are ready to make some decisions – not irreversible, by any means, but very important nonetheless – about what direction they want to take, not only in secondary school, but afterwards. Traditionally, this has been the case; secondary education has always meant the point at which options increase and alternative paths open up.

But there's long been a major problem here. After numerous reorganizations of various kinds over more than a half-century, the truth is that ultimately high schools end up catering primarily to the minority of students who go on to university, and these young women and men happen to be disproportionately from advantaged backgrounds. The dilemma is how to increase options and open up paths in a way that is inclusive, that doesn't leave out those students who come to school with fewer advantages, less "social capital," which usually means parents with less education and less money. In our opinion, differences in interest and aptitude, which is what program options should accommodate, have become confused with differences in social class and social rewards.

At this moment, despite all the different reforms that have been attempted, we still have a secondary system organized by levels that are supposed to reflect the inherent ability levels of individual students. In fact, however, it substantially reflects such factors as parents' occupations, education, and income levels, and sometimes, we



**We acknowledge, however reluctantly, that no plan, however flexible, is ever going to completely overcome social preferences, prejudices, and rewards which favour academic over applied skills and university over college education.**

fear, race, home language or national origin. We have concrete suggestions for reforming the high school specialization years, although we're only too aware of the failures that litter the road on which we walk.

We want to reform and improve education beyond the years of the common curriculum, so as to continue to strengthen core knowledge and skill areas for all students, while at the same time making alternative paths as clear and as open to everyone as possible. So, for example, we redefine the courses that are offered as falling into three categories, which shouldn't be thought of as reflecting greater or lesser ability, but rather different degrees of emphasis along a continuum from more applied to more academic. To clarify what we're getting at, we stress first that it's courses, not students, that fall into one or another of these three categories, and second, that categories are not levels or tracks.

As an example, in Grade 10 a student might choose a science course that emphasizes practical applications (let's call it an Ontario applied course); a history course that puts more emphasis on a traditional academic approach (an Ontario academic course); and a music course that attempts to maintain an even balance between applied and academic emphasis (a common course). This student may be someone who's thinking of going on to a technical course at college, but has a strong personal interest in history; or alternatively, someone who wants to study social sciences at university, and also wants to have an intelligent layperson's understanding of basic science; or, in either case, someone who wants to play in a pop band.

It's necessary that we acknowledge, however reluctantly, that no plan, however flexible, is ever going to completely overcome social preferences, prejudices, and rewards which favour academic over applied skills and university over college education. But we do believe that it is plausible that a system such as we suggest could at least increase students' options, and result in a better match between interest and talent on the one hand, and useful post-secondary education on the other.

For this to happen, colleges and universities must co-operate with secondary educators to redefine entrance requirements. Universities especially play a powerful role in determining the nature of high schools, and they too need to show more flexibility. The object would be to define entrance requirements in ways that are clearer for colleges and more differentiated for universities than at present. At the present time, universities for the most part look at students' marks in their last year only, and insist on courses that are defined as pre-university in all those six final OACs. While this is clear enough, it's not necessarily the best arrangement for the student; someone who wants to study history must take the same science course as someone else who wants to be a chemist, or else take no science course at all. Colleges, for their part, have no such blanket rule; but while they show greater flexibility, the paths to college are very confused and unclear for students, except in cases where individual colleges and secondary schools have worked out specific articulation programs.

There's more to teaching and learning in high schools than just taking courses, and we suggest a number of important changes in other areas as well. Smaller seems to be better in some matters, and we recommend that schools organize themselves into relatively small units, which will most often be small schools within large buildings, or schools within schools, sharing administrators and some facilities and courses. These smaller units



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could have a subject or career focus, as is now available in a few Ontario cities in schools that have an arts academy or a science academy. In such academies, students who are interested in a career in art history or arts administration, in engineering, or in electronics, can find a curriculum which has a clear relationship to their interests and to their futures – if course packages have been defined collaboratively between schools and institutions of higher learning, as we also suggest.

Reasonably enough, all students want to understand the practical applications of what they're learning, and we think it's highly motivating for all adolescents and young adults to be able to see a connection between their formal education and their futures. That's why we enthusiastically endorse such out-of-school learning experiences as co-operative education and community service (which, in fact, we think should be mandatory), both as emphases within courses and as experiences in themselves.

To our minds, the common needs of secondary students include certain outcomes that must be achieved as a prerequisite to graduation. To that end, we call for specified learner outcomes at the end of Grade 12 – in our scheme, the last year of high school – just as there are for the lower grades. Most of these outcomes will be common to all learners, while some will be specific to courses offered as academic or applied. And at this level, as well as earlier, we recommend more province-wide

assessments of courses through random sampling of students' work, so that educators and the public can know how successfully the curriculum is being learned, and so that some consistency is guaranteed amongst teachers and schools.

It's also time for a more efficient system at this level, one that doesn't encourage students to extend their stay in secondary school by a year or two beyond what's needed to take the required number of courses and graduate. We continue to support flexibility in learning time, and have no intention of making matters more difficult for students who need longer to complete their course of study for legitimate reasons connected to how they learn or to other circumstances in their lives. But it should not take the majority of students longer than three years, beginning in Grade 10, to complete their diploma. No other province keeps most of its students in secondary school so long, and there is no clear advantage to doing so. So far as we're concerned, all that extra expenditure would be far better spent on early childhood education. To that end we make recommendations to limit the number of credits students can accumulate before they graduate.

As well, we call for a second universal literacy test to be given initially in Grade 11, and to be passed before a student can receive a diploma. Any student failing the test should get extra help in preparing to repeat it. The emphasis which we have put on literacy, beginning at age 3, led to our recommending an early literacy guarantee in Grade 3, and culminates here in a final literacy guarantee: a promise to the public that any student who graduates high school in Ontario can read and understand, and can write and convey information and feeling, precisely as an educated adult should be able to do.

We have little doubt that if the kind of recommendations we've made were actually taken seriously – from the four engines to smaller schools, teacher advisors and career awareness – no student would graduate from an Ontario high school without being able to sail through such a test.



Consistent with our emphasis on continuity of concern for students' progress, we want secondary schools to maintain contact with and support for students until they are 18 years old, whether or not they remain in school to finish their diploma. Students need help with the transition not only to post-secondary education but to work. After all, almost a third of them do go directly from high school to work, and until they are 18, school should be there for them, just as it is for their peers who are going on with their education.

Finally, just as we began our discussion of the formal learning system before age 6, we do not end it at age 18. The increasing number of adults wanting to complete their secondary education do not always receive the attention they warrant from educators, yet they deserve the same opportunities as younger learners, and we recommend that space be guaranteed them in the publicly funded school system. As well, we strongly recommend that the literacy guarantee that we want our school system to make be also a literacy promise for all adults who wish to become fluent and literate in either of the official languages. After all, those adults include parents and future parents, grandparents and future grandparents, whose literacy is perhaps the most significant part of the learning legacy they pass on to their children and grandchildren. And as this long section has emphasized so strongly, a child from a family that values education is a child who is well on the way to becoming a lifelong learner.

### **Assessment: How we know what students learn**

One of the newfangled theories that's gained some currency in recent years is known as "outcome-based education." While somewhat more intricate and controversial than you'd expect, we use it here to mean that schools describe what students are expected to know when they graduate, and then rigorously assess their success in doing so. As one long-time Canadian educator commented, "This seems so eminently sensible that there must be something wrong with it."

We couldn't have said it better ourselves. It seems obvious to us that the public school system is responsible to the public, and owes it to the public to demonstrate how well it's doing with our children. It seems equally obvious that in learning, as in most other endeavours, your family is helpless to assist you to improve yourself unless you and they know the criteria for success and how close you come to meeting them. Finally, what holds for the individual holds for the system: its programs too must be assessed to determine if they're working properly. So we take a stand on behalf of close monitoring of every child's progress right from the earliest years, and of the system itself at every level, in order that both can learn to be even better.

But there's a catch here. All of this is easier said than done. We're concerned that too many citizens oversimplify the testing process. It's the simplest thing in the world to test what a student is able to remember today from yesterday's lesson, but it's also of strictly limited value. The quality of learning is not easily or effectively tested with simple quantitative measures. As the focus of education moves toward raising the levels of literacies for all students, so the traditional functions of schools – to slot students into future life chances or to make dubious comparisons among them using superficial measures – must be changed.



Testing for real understanding, for a student's capacity to think and reason, takes far more sophistication than this; in the trade, it's called authentic assessment, and mostly it must be done by teachers. That's why those parents who emphasize standardized tests almost exclusively, which they believe are teacher-proof, are missing a crucial truth. In the end, no one knows the student's capacities, or is in a position to assess them in all their nuances and complexity, better than the classroom teacher. That's why we make several recommendations designed to build teacher expertise in assessment, with a view to improving teaching and learning, and to making more information available to parents and the public about what's being taught and learned.

Further to that end, we recommend the development of a common provincial report card for each grade. This Ontario Student Achievement Report would relate directly to the explicit outcomes and standards of the given year or course, and would be the main vehicle for communicating to students and parents thorough information about the student's progress.

But we also recognize the need to go beyond the opinions of the individual teacher. We've already said that there should be universal literacy tests for all students both in Grade 3 (where there should be numeracy test as well) and in Grade 11, to guarantee that kids neither continue their primary and secondary studies nor graduate from high school without mastering the founda-

tion skills required for all subsequent learning. For this purpose we've called for the creation of a small, independent accounting agency to implement and report on these two universal assessments, among other things. This Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability would report on and make recommendations for improvement each year, not just to the Ministry but to the public at large.

And in order that the system itself operates at its peak, we recommend more regular assessment of all courses and programs of learning through random sampling of students across the province. That could help us know whether changes should be made either to course content or to teaching methods.

We also support continuing the recent practice of involving Ontario students in national and international assessments. But we issue a strong caution here. These assessments aren't horse races and can't be interpreted as such. They are complex learning tools that require careful analysis. Neither critics of the system nor the media make a useful contribution when they trumpet clear and unequivocal verdicts about the relative merit of various school systems based on results from these exercises. For similar reasons, we have little sympathy for so-called league tables that purport to rank individual schools by levels of success. There are many variables that go into making a good school, and these comparisons invariably ignore and distort the complex reality that every school represents.

Some of you may remember the publicity last October given to school-by-school and board-by-board results of the province-wide Grade 9 reading and writing test. The board of education of the City of York reported grades that were the worst among the Metro Toronto boards and below the provincial average. It's also true, according to a questionnaire that accompanied the test, that a third of all York students come from homes where English isn't spoken, compared to a provincial average of 14 percent; York's unemployment rate is higher than the provincial average, and it has substantial poverty; and 20



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percent of its residents have no more than a Grade 9 education. Only one media report we saw noted these data, and it's fair to assume only a tiny fraction of Ontarians are aware of them. We're not saying these factors are the cause of York's showing, but only irresponsible people would fail to take them into account.

There are few short-cuts to sensible monitoring of the education system. If we want serious information about how our students and schools are doing in preparing for the 21st century, we will have to accept that the process is long and involved, that it's not a series of horse races with clear-cut winners and losers, and that unless its primary purpose is to improve learning, we may as well not bother doing it at all.

### **Making the system equitable**

Supporters of a publicly funded education system have a duty to ensure that the system genuinely and equitably serves all members of the public. Every child in Ontario deserves to be educated well. While in theory every Ontario child has the right to go to school and do as well as she or he can, in practice life is more complicated. The research is clear here: Kids from better-off families arrive with a bundle of advantages that are denied to the less well-off. Poverty undermines student achievement. So does racism. Girls and young women still face obstacles unknown to males. Some kids have physical or intellectual disabilities. Many live in school districts that have fewer financial resources than others. Some belong to communities that seem to be having a collective problem making the best use of the system.

All of these inequities exist now in Ontario, and in principle they seem to us inconsistent with the obligations of public schools in a democratic society. But this is not simply some abstract theoretical issue. Schools matter. The higher your level of education, the greater your chance to have a job at all, and the more money and status the job is likely to carry. Every student in the province has a right to try to attain that goal, and the public school system must make that right a realistic one

by ensuring that the many barriers to equal learning opportunities that still exist are eliminated or at least minimized to the greatest extent possible.

We've tried to ensure equity throughout the school system in many of the recommendations we've already discussed for changing teaching and learning. But other changes are needed beyond the individual classroom in order for equity to be realized.

### **Equity in funding**

It wasn't really part of our direct mandate to deal with the amazingly complex field of education funding. But it soon became apparent to us that you can't talk about equity in schooling without talking about equity of funding. Ontario spends vast sums on elementary and secondary education – a total of \$14.5 billion in 1992, for example – but unfortunately the system of allocation isn't fair enough. Within Ontario you can find considerable variations in the amounts different boards are able to spend per student. Boards that are fortunate enough to have as taxpayers large commercial or industrial concerns or corporate head offices or major tourist attractions obviously have access to much higher assessment wealth for taxation purposes than others. Certain large boards, particularly some in Metro Toronto and Ottawa, are able to raise all their revenues quite independently of the provincial government, while others are substantially dependent on the Ministry for their opera-



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tions. Those assessment-wealthier boards are able to offer their students extra supports and services and more optional programs than most small, rural, and northern boards. The evidence is equally clear that Catholic and French-language boards are consistently under-funded compared with boards in the English public part of the system. None of this seems fair to us, and should be changed.

Catholic and French-language boards asked that those who don't designate their taxes to one of the two Catholic components of the system would not be assumed to support public schools, as is now the case under what's called the default provision. They suggest instead that those taxes go into a central pool and be distributed equitably on a per capita basis. We agree with this eminently sensible notion.

But on top of this, whatever changes to the tax system are needed, the government must ensure financial equity across the province. We consider it the clear responsibility of government to ensure an equitable amount of funding to each student in the province so that each is able to receive comparable services and programs – not identical, but comparable. To achieve this, we're recommending that equal per-pupil funding be determined at the provincial level and that its proper allocation be ensured by the province. But we also think boards should be able to spend up to 10 percent beyond that amount for special

local initiatives, to be raised from residential assessment only.

But just as comparable services don't mean identical ones, neither does equity mean identical funding for every board. Boards in the north and more isolated areas have certain greater costs than city boards. Boards with large numbers of new students requiring ESL or ALF, or boards with large numbers of students requiring transportation, obviously face demands others don't. The Ministry already recognizes these varying circumstances with a formula that uses different weighting factors to adjust the amount paid to each board. We expect this to continue under the new system we've proposed.

There's only one catch here: the entire process presupposes a knowledge of what constitutes a good program of education for every Ontario child. Some 30 years ago the Ministry probably had a definition of such a program and a calculation of what it would cost. But present funding arrangements seem to have little to do with any clear sense of an appropriate program and its costs. We think it's a matter of great importance that the Ministry, using the vision of quality education that is at the heart of our report, determine the cost of educating each Ontario student, and on that basis, plus weighting factors, determine what each board needs to provide that kind of education.

### **The Roman Catholic component of the system**

Ontario's publicly funded school system has four components: public English-language and French-language, and separate (Roman Catholic) English-language and French-language. Although the Catholic component has been a part of this system since the mid-19th century, before 1984 it was funded only to Grade 10; in that year funding was extended to the end of high school. (The background to this development is spelled out in Chapter 14 of this report.) For some, this remains a highly controversial move, yet the legislation implementing the extension, in the eyes of its supporters, simply implemented the full constitutional rights of Roman Catholics, and in fact it







## **If Catholic schools are to be equal members of the public education system, they must have equal rights with other schools.**

was ruled constitutional soon after by the Supreme Court. Since our mandate was to respect whatever rights have been protected by the Court, it's been a given that fully funded Catholic schools are to remain an integral part of the public school system.

Of the 40 assessment-poorest boards in Ontario, 39 are Catholic. Given their historically and constitutionally protected rights, we found it unacceptable that Catholic school boards in general receive less funding per student than public boards. The funding recommendations we just discussed are intended in part to eliminate such inequities.

Some 30 percent of all students, including over 80 percent of francophone students, are enrolled in Catholic schools. They and their parents expressed to us many of the same concerns as others in the system, but they also raised, besides funding, several issues of specific concern to their community. Catholic boards want the right to be able to favour Catholics when they hire teachers. While we're aware that some of them have always hired a few excellent non-Catholic teachers and we hope they still will, it seems obvious to us that the explicitly Catholic character of these schools requires Catholic teachers to sustain it. So we agree that Catholic schools are logically entitled to favour Catholic teachers in their hiring practices.

It was also demonstrated to us that educators with a background in Catholic schools aren't sufficiently repre-

sented in the Ministry of Education and Training, especially at the senior levels. We've been convinced that this has led to insufficient knowledge of and sensitivity to legitimate Catholic concerns by the Ministry on a number of occasions that we describe in Chapter 15. We recommend several measures to ensure Catholic schools adequate influence in all appropriate activities of the Ministry. Finally, we learned that faculties of education provide little specific professional preparation for teachers intending to work in the Catholic system. This does not seem sensible to us. If Catholic schools are to be equal members of the public education system, they must have equal rights with other schools. We call on the Ministry and faculties to establish a pre-service credit course on the foundations of Catholic education to be available at all faculties of education, and to assure that the religious education courses currently being offered receive full credit status.

### **Learning in French in Ontario**

Although francophones make up only 5 percent of Ontario's school population, they are the largest French-speaking minority in Canada outside Quebec. They made their message clear to this Commission in no uncertain terms. They believe that quality education in French is the key to the survival of their language, culture, and community, and they attributed their students' high drop-out rate and lesser academic success to what they saw as the built-in inequities of the education system. As it was for Catholics, our mandate was to work within a framework of rights for francophones, as established by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the courts. Given Canadian history and these charter rights, which we discuss fully in Chapter 15, many policy recommendations seem to us to flow logically.

Francophones argued that there were profound disparities between their confirmed constitutional rights and today's educational realities. The courts of Canada have agreed and have pointed out the obvious: an education in French whose quality is equivalent to that offered



**We want the Ministry to proceed as quickly as possible to adopt and implement a school governance model by and for francophones.**

in English; equivalent educational facilities and funding; and, perhaps most crucially, control and governance by francophones of all educational programs, facilities, and services for their children. We agree. We want the Ministry to proceed as quickly as possible to adopt and implement a school governance model by and for francophones.

We also found ourselves sympathetic to the concern of francophones that their children risk being assimilated into the larger anglophone world around them, with the obvious larger risk to the very future of that community. Unless francophone schools function to transmit and nourish not just the French language but the very foundations of francophone culture in Ontario, this is indeed a threatened community. That's why we recommend sufficient funding for francophone schools to provide both whatever courses are necessary for francophone students to recover or update their language skills and for "l'animation culturelle" in schools, to ensure that young francophones are able to live fully in their own language and culture from their first year of schooling to their last.

Given the ever-changing landscape of Ontario, there is now a growing French-language ethno-cultural reality that doesn't necessarily share all the priorities of Franco-Ontarians. The concerns of those groups seemed to us legitimate as well: adjusting to a new world, parents' participation, different cultural values, and the equity of services offered. We think that many of the recommendations we make for all students address these issues in a constructive way, but certain minorities face special problems that need special attention. But before we turn to them, we need to look at the distinctive situation of aboriginal people, who have both special constitutional status, like Catholics and francophones, and educational problems not unlike those in some of the communities we address immediately after that.

### **The world of aboriginal education**

We made a special effort to hear about aboriginal issues from aboriginals themselves. We heard from Native orga-

nizations and individuals in about one third of our hearings, we visited a number of their schools, and we established a working group with representatives of First Nations and Native service organizations. Almost a quarter of a million aboriginal people – 25 percent of all aboriginals in Canada – live in Ontario, and we learned of the great diversity among them. The issues that are central to those living on reserves, for example, may not have the same priority to the 47 percent of the total who live off-reserve, and we found an inevitable lack of consensus on certain matters.

On the other hand, on a number of key issues we found widespread consensus. Like Franco-Ontarians, First Nations are very concerned about the survival of their cultures and languages. They fear their children are failing to develop a better sense of their identity, and that curricula rarely reflect their history and culture. In school, they find that aboriginal students either drop out or are being suspended and expelled out of all proportion to their numbers. They worry about racist attitudes towards their children and about the lack of adequate counselling and support services that might make a difference. They acknowledge that even with the several special teacher education programs, which are now under way at three faculties of education, there exists an acute need for more Native teachers.

The candour of the aboriginal people we met was as stark as the problems they described. The issues are not



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simplified by overlapping provincial and federal jurisdictional questions, or by the diversity and small numbers of the aboriginal community. The destructive consequences for Native family life of the segregated schools, into which Native children were forced for so many decades, also continues to be felt. Yet there is reason for hope. Even given the formidable obstacles in their paths, the level of education achieved by aboriginal students is considerably higher today than it was just two decades ago. But it must be much better yet.

One key is power, and we join with the aboriginal people we met in urging the federal and provincial governments to continue negotiations leading to full self-government of education by First Nations. We also call on those two governments to co-fund the development of curriculum resources that more accurately reflect the history of Canada's aboriginal people. But it shouldn't just be Native people who learn about their own backgrounds; we believe Ontario teachers should have at least an appreciation of aboriginal history and culture that they're able to convey to both aboriginal and non-aboriginal students. It's important to being a thoughtful citizen that the latter have some sense of the world of aboriginal Canadians.

Throughout our report we speak of the necessity of adequate supports being available to all students who are facing learning difficulties of whatever kind. This need is great among Native students, and we ask the federal

government to ensure that funding is available to provide the support and resources that Native schools, Native children and teachers of Natives all need so badly. Finally, much good education happens among Native communities through distance education. But this technique could be dramatically improved through some of the information technology that we've made one of our four key engines of education change. CD-ROMs could be an effective weapon in the struggle to preserve Native languages. That's why we urge Ottawa to give top priority to ensuring the availability of good telecommunication networks throughout Ontario to support Native education by means of interactive video and computer networking.

Aboriginal communities made clear to us the great store they place in education. First, they believe that unless they themselves govern the education of their children, they won't have control over the preservation of their languages and cultures, and so will lose control over their own destinies. At the same time, they see education as giving them the skills and knowledge to be able to govern themselves. We hope our recommendations go far towards bringing them nearer their goals.

### **Gender and equity**

Girls and women continue to face barriers in the education system that are unknown to boys and men. It's true, happily, that some progress has been made in recent years. More females are enrolling in math and science courses, and more women are being promoted as principals, vice-principals, and administrative officers. But as we point out in various places throughout the report, we still have a long way to go.

Women still aren't represented adequately in curriculum materials. Promotions, especially to the top positions, are still happening at a snail's pace. Sex-role stereotyping still keeps many young women out of such areas as physics, engineering, technology, and the like. Others drop out of these subjects too early in their education, denying themselves access to a variety of chal-



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linging, high-status, high-paying occupations that have these subjects as prerequisites. Many remain unaware of the diversity of career opportunities that exist for all students, girls and boys. We've been disappointed to learn that all these problems still bedevil girls and women. That's why we believe that, among other responses, gender equity issues must be an important part of all teacher development programs.

Finally, we've been dismayed by the evidence of how far we have yet to come in giving girls and young women the same respect as we give boys and young men. Bullying starts at elementary school. Sexual harassment, both blatant and less overt, continues to be a problem in many of this province's junior and high schools. Here, at last, is an issue we believe has a simple solution: zero tolerance for sexual harassment of any kind.

### **Minorities and equity**

The astonishing diversity that characterizes the people of Ontario, including its student body, is a phenomenon we celebrate with pleasure. The variety of peoples of different religions, languages, and ethno-cultural and racial backgrounds who call Ontario home make this one of the most exciting places on the globe for young people to grow up. Of course it also creates certain notable challenges, not least in the world of education, but we firmly believe that the challenges in providing an education system that's sensitive to this diversity, that provides genuine equity for students from every conceivable background, are far outweighed by the benefits of learning from and about each other.

This is an appropriate moment to restate the unwavering commitment of this Commission to the proposition that the public school system's mandate is to serve all its students. This means that schools must welcome students of every background, faith, language, culture, or colour. On this there can be no compromise or qualification. We've made a series of recommendations, including teacher preparation, language supports, fair testing and the nature of the curriculum, to ensure that schools place

the concerns and needs of all students and communities at the very centre of the teachers' work. Every young person has the right to feel at home in the public schools of Ontario.

But the question we faced was whether every student has the right to attend a publicly funded school catering to his or her particular faith. While we were deliberating this enormously difficult issue, the courts again concluded that, for strictly constitutional and historic reasons, only Catholics as a religious minority have a right to such schools. Aside from the question of rights, however, a major matter of public policy remains to be decided, and it will be decided, as the court stated, by political not judicial decision. One day, following a long and difficult public debate, the issue will probably have to be faced by the Ontario government. But we believe a serious public airing is exactly what's needed before a decision is finally taken. To tell the truth, we ourselves were divided on the question, and we now leave it to others to resolve at a later stage.

That apart, in order to take our own rhetoric about equity seriously, and consistent with our view that every part of the system requires reliable assessment, we had to figure out how society would determine if equity for all



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students was truly being achieved. Obviously not all students are equal and not all students will achieve identical results. But sub-populations ought to have comparable results. If the system is working as we envision, there should be an equitable distribution of achievement across demographic or community lines. Unfortunately, that's now not the case. Representatives of the black community, of the Portuguese and Hispanic/Latin American communities, and (as we've just seen) of francophone and aboriginal communities came to tell us that their students are, on average, performing somewhat worse than students from other communities. If you compare such telling indices as the drop-out rates or the number of those going on to university, you quickly see that their results are lower.

We believe that the true test of equity is whether these differences are reduced or, preferably, eliminated in the next few years, and we strongly believe that this must be one of the goals that the entire system aims at, beginning immediately.

In Chapter 16, we describe our concern for the obvious discrepancy in educational results too often found among visible minorities and other minority groups, and we make suggestions that ought to address a number of the causes. As readers will by now expect, we hope that many of our recommendations to improve learning for all students would impact positively on minority groups as well. But some issues have a particular resonance for

minority students, such as having an inclusive and anti-racist curriculum; reducing streaming in high schools; ensuring that all learning materials are free of racist bias (though we think it's appalling that this should still be a problem in our schools); educating all teachers in anti-racist teaching techniques; and attracting more teachers from minority groups into the system.

But because we heard particularly poignant pleas from black parents, educators, and young people, we devoted special attention to the plight of black students in our schools. A large number of representatives of the black community chose to come and speak to us, and we visited several schools with significant black populations, including Saturday schools run by volunteers. The sad consensus was that, although some black students do very well indeed, the achievement levels of many black students left much to be desired. It seems that little improvement had taken place over the years, and a disproportionate number of black students were not going to get a high school diploma and were going to face, like other dropouts, poor job prospects, and possible social marginalization. The representatives argued forcefully and convincingly that the education system was failing their community and that something must be done to respond to the crisis in black education.

We agree. This entire report is about ways to make our schools better, and we make many recommendations that we're sure would substantially improve the academic performance of black students. We can hardly over-emphasize our sense of the urgency of this task. But we also go further. In areas with large numbers of black students, we call for the establishment of special programs based on success stories elsewhere and other innovative strategies that can be developed if only we have the will to try.

We already mentioned that groups and individuals from the Portuguese community expressed to us frustration that so many of their students were streamed into non-university courses and were dropping out, and that their teachers held such low expectations of them. They,



as well as some Hispanic/Latin American parents, were anxious for more meaningful involvement in their children's schooling. We are hopeful that, as with other groups with particular problems, many of our general recommendations will directly benefit these concerned parents. The language framework we developed includes more support for students whose first language is other than French or English. Early childhood education would be a distinct boon to their kids. Teachers taught to be more sensitive to the difficulties of all young people and to have high expectations of all their students clearly would be helpful. An inclusive curriculum matters, as does a school that actively encourages parents to support their children's learning. It's not acceptable to us that schools are failing the legitimate expectations of certain communities, and there's no excuse for it to continue.

### **Equity: Summing up**

Let's summarize our position in this section. One of the tasks this Commission set itself was to not only meet those Ontarians who wanted to meet us, but to seek out those from backgrounds that, we feared, might make them reluctant to appear before a formal public hearing. We think we came to have a good understanding of many of your concerns, hopes, and anxieties. We're satisfied that just about all families in this province share a common bond in wanting the best for their kids, and in seeing education as the key to their getting and becoming the best. If there's a catch here, it's that not enough of the parents of today's students grasp the central role they themselves could play in helping their kids do better at school.

All of this presents a huge challenge to the school system, one which as this section shows, it's not now meeting adequately. Schools need to be more responsive, more sensitive, more welcoming, more engaging to every school kid in this province. Our goal is academic success for all students and all communities. Anything less is unacceptable.

### **Power and decision-making in the education system**

Thousands and thousands of decisions, from the most trivial to the most momentous, are made about every aspect of Ontario's school system every year. When we remember that in a population of ten million, these schools contain two million students and more than 100,000 teachers, and then add on their families, plus the countless others whose lives are intimately involved with schools, from textbook writers to cafeteria suppliers, we get a sense of just how vast and complex the system is. That's why figuring out who has the power to make those decisions, or the influence to affect them, is so important. In our mandate, this was called the governance issue.

One of the things we eventually learned was how many more sources of influence there were than we expected. At the top, although this doesn't necessarily mean having all the power, are the Minister of Education and Training and his political assistants. Then there's the Ministry's civil service, including its regional offices. Naturally there are the school boards, but there again within most of them we have two distinct groups, the elected trustees and the board administrators. There are principals, department heads, teachers, and the unions that represent all Ontario teachers and principals. There are parents and members of the business community, plus librarians, social service agencies, computer salespeople, and many others. And we mustn't forget students, although in the



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power picture they're normally at the farthest margins. All of these groups have some influence over the system – even students – and almost all of them want more. Even universities are in the picture in a big way; besides the obvious central role of faculties of education, they have a decisive influence in the way our high schools are organized, although few Ontarians know it.

Frankly, we found the system complex and far from transparent. Many of the players have overlapping responsibilities, such as in curriculum development; some are too often in conflict with others, such as boards and the Ministry; some have powers they fail to exert, such as the Ministry; some, including parents and students, want real power, or at least influence, while others merely want to be consulted more regularly. Inevitably there are struggles for power among these interests. Sometimes those tussles involve legitimate areas of principle, while others seem to be rather more self-interested. At the moment, almost none of the many players is satisfied with the status quo (although it's a real question whether it can ever really be otherwise). For us, the objective became to clarify roles and responsibilities, to reduce overlap and confusion, and to find the elusive right balance of power and influence between them. As always, the overriding criteria we used in seeking that balance is as plain as can be: Does it promote good learning and teaching? Does it put the interests of student achievement first and foremost?

A second issue follows almost inevitably: our mandate calls it accountability, and what it means is how we the public know whether our public education system is functioning well enough, and who is to answer for performance and results. With so many cooks stirring the pot, no-one seems in charge, responsibilities aren't self-evident, ordinary citizens have little idea whom to blame or credit for the way they believe our schools are working. This isn't the way it ought to be in a democratic society.

While the main report has many pages of thoughts and recommendations on these issues, we'll only indicate our key points here. We want more authority for the Ministry, more influence for students and teachers, more precise responsibilities for boards, and a greater role for principals, parents, and community folk in bringing community resources closer to schools. If our proposals are implemented, and if power and influence are redistributed in the way we envision, then those who most directly matter in the achievement of better learning and teaching – kids, teachers, principals, parents, and the community – will all genuinely feel that the system takes them seriously, that their roles and views matter, and that they have a responsibility to make their schools the very best institutions possible.

### **Students**

Only a small number of presentations, other than those from students themselves, suggested more influence for students in their own schools. We see this omission as short-sighted, the waste of an invaluable resource. We don't mean students running schools, or hiring or firing teachers, or any of the silly extreme notions these words could be taken to imply. But students, particularly from Grade 7 on, have insights into their schools, principals, teachers, and courses that no-one else possibly can, and everyone can learn from those insights. Instead of remaining passive participants in their own lives, we want kids to be formally entitled to have their views heard.







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That's why we recommend that student councils be given the responsibility for organizing students' views on all aspects of school life. We believe there should be at least one student member, elected by his or her peers, on every school board. We want the Minister to create an Ontario student and youth council comparable to the Ontario Parent Council which was set up in 1993. And we believe kids are entitled to be involved in developing codes of behaviour and other selected school policies and procedures that affect them so directly. Finally, we want students, principals, teachers, and parents to collaborate on a students' charter of rights and responsibilities that would fully set out the roles of students as citizens of the world of Ontario schools.

**Teachers and principals**

As indicated earlier, we spend many pages in the main report detailing our understanding of how the highly complex process of learning happens. That's why we insist that the process of teachers' professional development be significantly expanded both at the preliminary stage and throughout every educator's career. Understanding kids and their learning requires common sense, experience, and caring. But this is not enough. Considerable skill and specialized knowledge is also required. It would be unreasonable to hope that many parents or, for that matter, business people, would have the kind of knowledge or training that's needed.

For this reason, we've concluded that no-one's better equipped to be in charge of schools than educators themselves – the principals, vice-principals, department heads, and teachers. Of course they are no more infallible than other mortals, and it's obvious that their skills must be substantially enhanced to cope with the tough new world that confronts them. But in the end, it's the principal who makes or breaks a school. There can be excellent classrooms without excellent principals, but there can be no excellent schools. That's why they must be given the responsibility for managing their schools, and must have greater authority than most do now by sharing the hiring of new staff with boards, and by gaining increasing control over their schools' budget.

At the same time, however, any principal worth his salt – we say “his” because the numbers are still overwhelmingly male – will naturally consult parents about the life of the school. They will – they must – make parents feel welcome in the school, and will make sure that the staff gives parents concrete support in helping their children with schoolwork at home. They will create a school climate in which teaching and learning, and student achievement, are seen as the key purposes that unite everyone in the school. They will make the teaching staff full partners in running the school, and will pay close attention to the opinions of students. And they will be the school's senior liaison with its external community, forging those relationships that will remove from teachers some of the inappropriate burdens they have been obligated to assume. Any principal who fails to live up to these obligations is in the wrong job.

Let's focus again on the all-important teacher. We can't repeat too many times that no serious improvement in our schools is possible without the enthusiastic co-operation of every teacher in the system. While studies of school restructuring projects agree on precious little, such as whether centralization or decentralization of decision-making around schools is more effective for better learning, virtually all conclude that making teachers full collaborators in running schools is a positive step. How



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we can recognize teachers as the keys to a superior learning system and then fail to delegate to them significant responsibilities beyond their own classrooms is impossible for us to comprehend. In return – it should hardly be necessary to say again – teachers must realize they are responsible for their performance to their students and to their students' parents. The vivid symbol of the closed classroom door must not be taken as the right of a teacher to exclude or ignore those with a legitimate right to participation and influence.

Teachers also have the right to have their interests as employees protected by the five teachers' federations. That's why we recommend that these federations restrict their activities mainly to that important role, and that the responsibility for teachers' professional development be given to the new College of Teachers that we call for in Chapter 12. We should also emphasize that while we're pretty sure that few commissions could be more sympathetic to the trade-union functions of the teachers' federations than this one, the right of all students to learn and the need of schools to introduce the kind of reforms our report suggests, must be the absolute priority for everyone involved in the education system.

Let's be candid again. If the system is to be transformed substantially, the need for flexibility which we've stressed must be the rule for all stakeholders, and not just the teachers' unions. For example, while we naturally support university autonomy, we fully expect the ten faculties of education to be co-operative partners in the education system. That means all these faculties will agree – we'd like to think they will do enthusiastically – with the major changes in teacher preparation that we set out in Chapter 12, and will strive to forge a more common agenda than is now the case.

## **Parents**

Just as the research is clear about the positive impact of involving teachers in school management, so it's equally strong about the positive role parents can play in their kids' education. Nothing motivates a child more than a

home where learning is valued. If parents show a close interest in their children's school progress, help with homework and home projects, and attend their kids' various school performances and sports events, their kids are more likely to have higher student achievement, higher aspirations, better attendance, and a more positive relationship with their teachers. That's why, for us, this form of parental involvement in schooling takes precedence over all others, and we've described it as a priority for every principal and teacher to take active steps to help parents do exactly those things.

In our view, this is a far more productive use of the often limited time and energy of most parents than being involved in sharing management responsibilities with the principal; as far as we can see, only a small minority of parents are actually interested in playing that kind of role, and there's no evidence we know of to demonstrate that it improves kids' learning. We've recommended a parents' charter of rights and responsibilities that will spell out unmistakably the right of a parent to be welcomed in school, the kind of contact with and support from teachers that they're entitled to, and a line of communication between home and school that will be known to all concerned. There's no doubt in our minds that schools



mic teaching. Inevitably and reasonably, the council would want to advise the principal on general matters relating to improving the school, and the wise principal would seek and heed its advice.

### **School boards**

By this stage, careful readers will have observed that we've yet to discuss the power and influence of the only two democratically elected players in the world of schooling, the Minister of Education and Training and the 172 boards of education. Let's deal first with those controversial bodies known as boards of education.

Boards are curious animals. On the one hand, we happily acknowledge that some of the most exciting educational initiatives in Ontario over the years have been driven not by the Ministry but by individual boards with dynamic trustees and dedicated administrators. Some of the best educators in this province have worked and still work at the board level. And across Ontario we know of large numbers of committed trustees who work hundreds of hours on behalf of their students for a mere pittance in payment. This is one reality of boards of education in Ontario.

But there's another. For many people, boards are the unknown components in the system. Trustees are elected by a tiny proportion of the electorate, if indeed they don't win by acclamation. It might be embarrassing to discover how many constituents know their trustees' names. Board agendas too often reflect matters that are light years away from what happens in their schools; anyone who has sat in on a meeting of a school board knows that it can be a truly surrealistic experience. The line between trustees as determiners of policy and administrators as implementers of policy is often anything but self-evident. On the other hand, trustees sometimes involve themselves too intimately and inappropriately with the direct lives of their schools.

These are some of the reasons that some jurisdictions elsewhere in the industrialized world have eliminated or sharply curtailed the power of such boards. But the

would benefit significantly if the views and concerns of parents were solicited in a regular and systematic way. Many schools and school boards have become highly adept at using the language of openness and sharing with their parents; now the deed must replace fine words.

### **The community**

Similarly, while some want to mandate a parents' council for every school, we think it would be more productive to establish school-community councils on which parents would have significant representation. These councils are the centrepiece of one of our four engines, the one we call community education. We've argued throughout our report that schools, or at least teachers, can't handle everything that's being thrown at them, and that their primary responsibility must be the academic one. We don't for a moment minimize the social and other non-academic needs of our students, but they simply must be shared with appropriate community members or agencies if teachers are going to be able to do their jobs most effectively.

To organize and mobilize those community resources, and to be the school's main structural link with the community, are the general functions of these new school-community councils. Led by the principal, and comprising community representatives, parents, and some teachers and students, it's this council that would create the alliances to allow teachers to concentrate on better acade-



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effects of these changes are not at all clear, and we've seen no compelling evidence that they've had a particularly positive effect on kids' learning – the supposed point of the exercise, we need to keep reminding ourselves. Besides, in a province as vast and diverse as this, there's no way five thousand schools could be administered either individually or by the Ministry, so we don't support the elimination of school boards in Ontario.

On the other hand, because of our overriding belief that Ontario school kids need a largely common and equitable learning experience, we recommend the transfer of several key responsibilities away from boards. We believe that determining the level of each board's expenditures, for example, should be the Ministry's job. The Ministry should also be responsible for developing more detailed course guidelines, although we fully expect they'll use the abundance of existing local expertise to do so.

As a result, the primary responsibility of school boards will be to translate general Ministry guidelines into viable local practice. Their job is to make local policy consistent with both provincial policy and local realities. They set clear expectations and guidelines for their schools and work with them to make sure they're progressing towards those ends. Once they know their budgets, boards must decide – using overall Ministry policy criteria – how the money is to be distributed. Boards provide direct lines of communication between the school system and the general public. Boards must actively support the work of school-community councils in helping schools mobilize community resources that are not specific to a single school.

We want to stress that we don't under-estimate at all the importance of such work. But we also need to keep it in perspective. It is a role with finite boundaries. The job we see boards doing needs to be done, and we're confident it can be done – and done well – on a part-time basis, as it's currently done by most Ontario trustees. For us, the logical conclusion is that boards don't need full-time trustees, so we think it's sensible that their remuneration

not exceed \$20,000 a year. But we were startled to learn how few trustees this would affect. Only about 5 percent of all trustees, in just seven of Ontario's 172 boards, now make more than that amount. Of course it's also true that these lucky few may be supported by assistants, secretaries, offices, and the like.

It's also possible that boards don't need as many trustees as they have now, although our review of the literature doesn't reveal any magic formula for determining exactly what number of trustees per population makes most sense. Ultimately, whatever number is decided on will be an arbitrary one, and most of us have no strong feelings on the issue.

Similarly, most of us didn't end up sharing the view of some Ontarians that we have far too many school boards. As with trustees, we were never able to establish any objective factors for determining what the right number of boards should be. Ontario has far fewer school boards per capita than any other province in Canada, as well as far more municipal councils than school boards; Chapter 17 has some very revealing data on these comparisons.



Nor did we find any evidence that the number of boards relates one way or another to the quality of learning. The amounts of money that could be saved by having fewer boards and used elsewhere in the system don't appear to be huge. We encourage those boards that are so small as to be of dubious viability to amalgamate. But in the end, given the evidence, most of us concluded that this simply wasn't one of the big issues in Ontario education.

And if boards' responsibilities and trustees' time are both reduced, it follows that the number of administrators and support staff in many boards may be able to shrink as well, although we realize this has already begun during some of the budget-slashing exercises of the past few years. At the same time, we shouldn't under-estimate the need for boards to have sufficient top-flight staff to play their important role in assuring that schools are able to meet their learning goals. Similarly, while we naturally recommend that neighbouring boards co-operate as much as possible on as many matters as possible to make their operations more efficient, we recognize that across the province many such arrangements are already in full swing.

If the various changes that we've recommended in this section are implemented, there would be one board that, on balance, would no longer seem necessary. Metro Toronto has a two-tiered system of six local boards, all of which send representatives to a Metropolitan Toronto Public Board of Education. There was once a good reason

for this set-up, but we're persuaded that the Metro Board no longer has sufficient responsibilities to justify its separate existence. This will be particularly true if, as we recommend, the province assumes the direct responsibility for school funding. It should not prove too difficult to make adequate provision for the few remaining Metro board functions, notably Metro-wide collective bargaining. It is time to phase out the umbrella level of Metro's two tiers of school boards.

### **The ministry**

From school boards we move logically to the Ministry of Education and Training itself. But this is one of those cases where last is by no means least because to the Ministry we assign a powerful central role to drive the process of reform that our report is all about.

We understand that this will seem to be a controversial recommendation at a time when there exists considerable dissatisfaction with the Ministry in many quarters. Teachers, parents, trustees, and administrators all expressed dismay about the many changes of directions and additional demands that successive Ministers have imposed on the system in recent years, often without sufficient rationale and adequate planning. At the same time, they also complained of the lack of Ministry strength and focused leadership over the last several years, as staff cuts have taken their toll. So we present our views here keenly aware of these concerns, yet confident they can be overcome.

We're persuaded that the needs of Ontario's students call for a strong Ministry that gives firm, creative leadership to the province's vast education enterprise, while remaining sensitive to the need for maximum local input. We expect the Ministry to establish the overall purposes and direction of the education system as a whole. At the moment, because large assessment-rich boards like those in Ottawa and Metro Toronto are not dependent for funding on the Ministry, they are able to be somewhat selective in carrying out Ministry policies.



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While throughout this report we've attempted to build in the flexibility to accommodate Ontario's remarkable diversity and scale, it's precisely that diversity and scale that make it all the more important to have common education policies to bind us together. For this reason, although we value the role of boards in giving life to Ministry policies at the local level, we nevertheless want several of the responsibilities that now sit with boards to be transferred to the Ministry.

In order to achieve greater equity for all students, we believe the bulk of the taxing powers that are now in board hands should become the Ministry's. In fact, we see that ensuring equity for all students is a major Ministry responsibility. As well, the Ministry should be primarily responsible for producing a common curriculum and common outcomes for all levels of schooling, although we expect it to use the great expertise of educators across the province to do so. We want the Ministry to produce a uniform new report card for use by all boards.

Yet at the same time, we've deliberately sought to divest the Ministry of significant authority in certain areas where we believe others, closer to the life of schools, are in a better position to make decisions. For example, we expect principals and teachers to have greater authority and responsibility to make their schools work better, and our College of Teachers would take responsibility for teacher preparation and professional development.

Finally, and importantly, besides the Ministry of Education and Training, several other ministries of the Ontario government have key roles to play in realizing our vision of a better learning system for this province's students. If the potential of school-community partnerships is to be taken seriously, rather than as the easy stuff of politicians' speeches, inter-ministerial co-operation both at Queen's Park and at the local level is absolutely vital. It is always dismaying to learn how difficult it appears to be for members in different ministries of the same government to collaborate, and it seems to require leadership at the highest level of government to make it

happen. The power of the government is not in question. Whether the will exists remains to be seen.

### **Accountability**

How can the public be reassured that the public education system is spending public funds and carrying out its mandate satisfactorily? And who's responsible? Those have become burning (and legitimate) questions for many Ontario citizens. The public has a right to know, and to be satisfied, that the system is operating effectively, efficiently, and equitably.

But this task, like so many others, is not as simple as some think. There are a large number of indicators of education success and quality, not just, as we've explained, how your child does on a particular test or report card. And the indicators for effectiveness, efficiency, and equity are themselves quite distinct from each other, and may even be in conflict. But having said the job's complicated, we insist it must be done.

While we're reluctant to suggest creating more bureaucracies, the need for independent and public scrutiny of the education system is paramount. For this purpose we're recommending a new body, an Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability, consisting of a small number of experts in education and assessment, and reporting directly to the Legislature. One of its chief responsibilities would be to evaluate and report on the success of Ontario's education policy primarily through



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the two universal literacy tests we've called for in Grades 3 and 11, as well as the Grade 3 numeracy test.

There are other tasks that would fall naturally to this new office. It would develop a series of indicators of the system's performance that the Ministry and boards would have to use. It would establish the guidelines for the contents of the Ministries' and boards' annual reports. Also, to assure the public that all the information in these various reports is accurate and that the interpretations of the health of the system are defensible, the office should review them all and monitor the situation.

If it does its work properly and communicates its findings effectively, this modest office should go some way to reassuring Ontarians that their public education system is, at last, truly accountable to the public.

### **Conclusion and implementation**

After 20 months of work, this Commission concluded that while the Ontario education system has performed reasonably well to the present, a series of external forces – economic, technological, social, and demographic –

require that it be transformed now in dramatic ways. Happily, we discovered that we have the knowledge and techniques to achieve this transformation. It can be done. Our schools can graduate mature and responsible young men and women who have had a rigorous and challenging education, who have emerged with an impressive base of knowledge and skills, who can think critically, evaluate, analyze, synthesize, work co-operatively and respectfully, and who have learned to learn and to love learning. In setting out to change the system, we should aim our sights at nothing less than these high goals.

In the course of our own extensive work – and learning – certain lessons about the process of education reform became clear. If we fail to take these lessons to heart, we fear that the process of change may well be doomed from the outset.

1. There are no instant solutions to the problems of today's schools, no short cuts. But there *are* solutions.
2. The process of learning is highly complex, but there *are* ways to get our children to learn better.
3. The education system is enormously complicated, but there *are* ways to transform it.
4. No serious change can happen without the willing co-operation of teachers.
5. Parents who create an atmosphere that values learning, and who support their children's school efforts, are giving their children a major advantage. Parents are a largely untapped resource.
6. The best way to ensure that kids do well at school is to provide all of them with affluent, literate, professional parents. Clearly, this is impossible; however, schools *can* compensate for the disadvantages many students bring with them from home. So even though a student's background remains the chief determinant of educational success in Ontario, schools have the capacity – if they have the will – to overcome the handicaps of a child's background.
7. When all is said and done, we place our confidence in the knowledge and dedication of the professional







**We'd be deeply disappointed – as we know the thousands of citizens who shared their views with us would be – if this report ended up being a political football.**

educators of Ontario. While every parent and every member of the community has significant contributions to make, it is our teachers, principals, and other educators who must provide the inspirational, active, hands-on leadership role that is needed.

8. There are important and powerful players in the education system. The influence of some of these players, like the teachers' federations, is obvious, while that of others, equally powerful, for instance, universities, is less well known. But all players must be committed to the process of radical change if it has any hope of success.

If only all Ontarians agreed with these statements. Yet too many of our fellow citizens continue to insist that everything would be okay if we only implemented the one particular idea or another that they advocate. Too many attempts at reform ignore totally – and to our minds astoundingly – the role of teachers. Too little attention is paid by many to the role of background in unfairly determining a child's success in school. Too many of the players in the system have been reluctant to demonstrate the flexibility that's clearly necessary if real change is ever going to happen. It's important to remember that all of these are obstacles to change.

In Chapter 20 of the main report, where we launch a detailed discussion of how we expect our report to be followed up, we point out the unusual timing into which we've happened to stumble. Everyone knows a provincial

election is just around the corner, and we'd be deeply disappointed – as we know the thousands of citizens who shared their views with us would be – if this report ended up being a political football thrown around during an election for short-term electoral purposes. There is nothing of partisan politics in this report, and we call on all three political parties to put the needs of our students first and to commit themselves to action on our major recommendations.

Maybe it's useful to summarize very briefly the approaches that led us to our specific proposals. We see the primary purpose of schools to be learning and teaching, focusing on the development of the literacies, by which we mean escalating levels of intellectual competence. But schools must also tend to the non-academic needs of their students – in part because they often directly affect learning – which they can do only with the active co-operation of the surrounding community. (The co-ordinated province-wide response to escalating violence in our schools is an example of how all parts and every level of the education system can come together in the face of a shared concern.) We then proceed to build our recommendations on what we know about how learning happens and what constitutes good teaching. We want to adapt the "culture of schools" so that it provides the best possible atmosphere to maximize learning.

We take very seriously the need to make the education system truly equitable for every student of the province – a goal we are far from attaining right now. There needs to be a more appropriate balance of power and influence in the system, with different, and in many cases greater, roles, to be played by students, parents, the community, boards of education, and not least the Ministry itself. Finally, we need to ensure systematic feed-back and monitoring of both students and their programs, with a view to on-going improvement as well as to satisfying the legitimate rights of Ontario citizens to know how the system is doing and who's responsible for doing it.

Of course there are costs attached to many of our recommendations, and in Chapter 20 we try to be candid about them. On the one hand, we have no illusions about the availability of large new sums of public money; on the other, we felt we had to indicate what we believe it will take to improve the system dramatically. It's also true



that no group such as ours has the resources to make anything like a reliable estimate of the cost of, say, a full program of early childhood education. Yet in a real sense, such an exercise is superfluous, since we understand perfectly well that such a program would only be phased in over a good number of years in any event, as is equally true of other “big” recommendations such as equipping all schools with the tools of information technology.

We also believe that it is necessary to make some tough decisions about re-allocating funds already in the system. To take the same example again, if we advocate early childhood education, we also recommend doing away with the fifth year of high school that so many students now take. Funding should be redistributed from the later stages of schooling to the earlier ones. We also make the argument that early childhood education would reduce the need for subsidized day-care programs, while all early intervention efforts are likely to save costs later on for extra supports such as special education and remedial programs. In that sense, early intervention is the exact equivalent of preventive health measures, in which initial extra costs bring a wealth of savings – eventually.

We’ve always acknowledged that while many of our recommendations can begin to be implemented tomorrow morning, many of them can only happen over time; you can’t, obviously, introduce a universal program of early childhood education overnight. We suggest, in Chapter 20 and its appendices, any number of ways in which all the players in the system should get involved in implementing our recommendations not only immediately but over five-and ten-year periods, but you can see that it’s impossible in this brief summary to repeat all those ideas.

We hope everyone interested enough in our report will soon turn to the those parts where we indicate what you yourself can do. And everyone can do something; as we’ve said before, there’s a great deal to do at the level of every single school in the province without waiting for any initiatives or any authorization from the Ministry.

But since all eyes will inevitably be on the Ministry of Education and Training as the single most important player in the overall transformation of the education system, and since we expect it to give real leadership and

**There’s a great deal to do at the level of every single school in the province without waiting for any initiatives or any authorization from the Ministry.**

direction, let’s focus here on its role in making our recommendations real.

First, we expect the Minister to announce his support for our recommendations. Second, the Ministry should establish an Implementation Commission, reporting to the Legislature itself, with clear and broad authority to oversee the entire complicated process of reform and change. Third, while that commission is starting up, the Ministry should clearly articulate the goals, directions and principles that will define the system in the next decade.

Fourth, the Ministry should immediately begin setting at least the groundwork for a wide range of initiatives of all kinds: changes in French-language governance, the College of Teachers, a central body to co-ordinate information technology, early childhood education, assigning educators from Catholic schools to central positions in the Ministry itself, charters of rights and responsibilities for both parents and students, an inter-ministerial co-ordination of services for children, the Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability, school-community councils. Let’s not be immodest here: The biggest problem is hardly finding recommendations to begin working on.

And again we can’t emphasize too much that while the Ministry gets to work, we hope all the other key stakeholders do as well. There are many groups who will determine whether or not our report simply collects dust. Boards of education, whose very *raison d’être* is in ques-



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tion in some circles, can demonstrate their usefulness by taking an aggressive role in translating Ministry policies and setting priorities at the local level. Teachers' unions, frankly, can make or break any and all attempts at radical reform, and we urge them to demonstrate that our great faith in teachers' professionalism and the central role we assign to teachers in every part of our report wasn't misplaced.

Principals and teachers certainly don't need to wait for authorization from on high to begin matching action to rhetoric in genuinely welcoming parents into their schools and offering advice on how they can better support their children's learning. Neither need principals wait for anyone's permission to begin establishing the school-community councils we call for, reaching out to the community to share the responsibilities that schools have been assigned by society, whether they could cope with them or not. Both business people and trade unions should begin taking seriously family-friendly workplace policies, while the business community should adopt policies for distributing surplus computing equipment to schools.

Finally, we hope that large numbers of parents and young people are reading this little volume, and will act on it. During the life of this Commission, we went out of our way to hear from and speak to more than the parents and young people who have the self-confidence to address themselves to fancy-sounding royal commissions.

We actively sought out and listened to the views of those who are uncomfortable in public and who are rarely heard by commissions like ours. It's to all of you that this volume was especially directed. Now that you've read it, we hope you'll actively pursue with boards, principals, and teachers the kind of expanded role in the learning system that we believe you're entitled to and are capable of playing. And you don't need anyone's okay to begin demanding your rights or, just as importantly, to exercise your own responsibilities.

If this report begins to be implemented in these ways, we're persuaded that a major transformation of the education system will be set in train. It won't be either an easy or a smooth road, but radical change never is. Through thousands of actions taken by everyone with an interest in Ontario education, guided by the overriding goal of improved learning for all our students, we are confident that our schools will rise to the challenge of preparing our children for the unpredictable world of the 21st century.

Together, Ontarians can forge a truly remarkable learning system. The job of this Commission is done. The Report of the Royal Commission on Learning now belongs to you. Its future is in your hands, as is the future of the education system itself.

Yours sincerely,

Monique Bégin, Co-Chair  
Gerry Caplan, Co-Chair  
Manisha Bharti, Commissioner  
Avis Glaze, Commissioner  
Dennis Murphy, Commissioner







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# ***For the Love of Learning:* Recommendations**

This section includes the complete set of recommendations of the Royal Commission on Learning.



## Chapter 7: The Learner from Birth to Age 6

The Commission recommends:

1. That Early Childhood Education (ECE) be provided by all school boards to all children from 3 to 5 years of age whose parents/guardians choose to enrol them. ECE would gradually replace existing junior and senior kindergarten programs, and become a part of the public education system;
2. That the ECE program be phased in as space becomes available;
3. That, in the implementation of ECE, the provincial government give priority funding to French-language school units;
4. That the Ministry of Education and Training develop a guide, suitable for parents, teachers, and other caregivers, outlining stages of learning (and desirable and expectable learner outcomes) from birth onwards, and that it link to the common core curriculum, beginning in Grade 1. This guide, which would include specific learner outcomes at age 6, would be used in developing the curriculum for the Early Childhood Education program.

## Chapter 8: The Learner from Age 6 to 15

The Commission recommends:

5. That learner outcomes in language, mathematics, science, computer literacy, and group learning/interpersonal skills and values be clearly described by the Ministry of Education and Training from pre-Grade 1 through the completion of secondary school, and that these be linked with the work of the College Standards and Accreditation Council, as well as

universities; and that clearly written standards, similar in intent to those available in mathematics and language (numeracy and literacy), also be developed in the other three areas;

6. That the acquisition of a third language become an intrinsic part of the common curriculum from a young age up to Grade 9 inclusively, with the understanding that the choice of language(s) taught or acquired will be determined locally, and that the acquisition of such a third language outside schools will be recognized as equivalent by an examination process, similar to what we term challenge exams within the secondary school credit system;
7. That all elementary schools integrate a daily period of regular physical exercise of no less than 30 minutes of continuous activity as an essential part of a healthy school environment. Schools that have problems scheduling daily periods should, as a minimum, require three exercise periods per week;
8. That, at the Grade 1–5/6 level, an educator monitor a student's progress during the years the student is at the school, and be assigned responsibility for maintaining that student's record;
9. That the Ministry of Education and Training and the local boards of education provide incentives to large middle (and secondary) schools to create smaller learning units, such as schools-within-schools or houses;
10. That, beginning in Grade 7, every student have a Cumulative Education Plan, which includes the student's academic



and other learning experiences, is understood to be the major planning tool for the student's secondary and post-secondary education, and is reviewed semi-annually by the student, parents, and by the teacher who has a continuing relationship with and responsibility for that student as long as she or he remains in the school;

11. That curriculum guidelines be developed in each subject taught within the common curriculum, to assist teachers in designing programs that will help students achieve the learning outcomes in *The Common Curriculum*. These guidelines should include concrete suggestions on how teachers can share with parents ways to help their children at home;

12. That the Minister of Education and Training amend the regulations to enable school boards to extend the length of the school day and/or school year;

13. That the Ministry of Education and Training work with curriculum and learning specialists to develop strategies (based on sound theory and practice and enriched with detailed examples) for providing more flexibility in the amount of time available to students for mastering curriculum;

14. That local schools and boards be allowed to develop and offer programs in addition to those in *The Common Curriculum*, as long as those options meet provincially developed criteria, and as long as at least 90 percent of instructional time is devoted to the common curriculum for Grades 1 to 9.

## **Chapter 9: The Learner from Age 15 to 18**

The Commission recommends:

15. That the Ministry of Education and Training review community college education – its mandate, funding, coherence, and how it fits into the system of education in Ontario, including clarification of access routes from secondary school to college, and with special attention being paid to students who are not university-bound;

16. That secondary school be defined as a three-year program, beginning after Grade 9, and that students be permitted to take a maximum of three courses beyond the required 21, for a total of not more than 24 credits. We

further recommend that all courses in which the student has enrolled – whether completed or incomplete, passed or failed – be recorded on that student's transcript;

17. That only two, not three, differentiated types of courses should exist;

18. That some courses (to be called Ontario Academic Courses, or OAcCs) be offered with an academic emphasis; that others (to be called Ontario Applied Courses, or OAPCs) be offered, with an emphasis on application; and that still others be presented as common courses, blending academic and applied approaches, and with no special designation;

19. That large secondary schools be reorganized into "schools-within-schools" or "houses," in which students have a core of teachers and peers with whom they interact for a substantial part of their program. Such units may be topic-, discipline-, or interest-focused;

20. That as a mandatory diploma requirement all students participate each year in physical exercise at least three times per week, for not less than 30 minutes per session, either in or outside physical education classes;

21. That as a mandatory diploma requirement all students take part in a minimum of 20 hours per year (two hours per month) of community service, facilitated and monitored by the school, to take place outside or inside the school;

22. That the same efforts to centrally develop strategies and ideas for increasing flexibility and individualization of the pace of learning, which we called for in the common core curriculum, be applied to the specialization years;

23. That a set of graduation outcomes be developed for the end of Grade 12; that they be subject and skill oriented, as well as relatively brief; and that they cover common learner outcomes for all students as well as supplemental learner outcomes for the OAcC and the OAPC programs;

24. That students have the option of receiving as many as two international language credits toward their diploma no matter where they obtained their training or knowledge of the language(s) if, upon examination, they demonstrate appropriate levels of language mastery;



25. That the Ontario Training and Adjustment Board (OTAB) be given the mandate to take leadership, working in partnership with school boards, community colleges, and other community partners, to establish programs that will assist secondary school graduates and drop-outs to transfer successfully to the workforce, including increasing opportunities for apprenticeship and for other kinds of training as well as employment counselling;

26. That the Ministry of Education and Training create a brief and clear document that describes for parents what their children are expected to learn and to know, based on the developmental framework of stages of learning from birth to school entrance, *The Common Curriculum*, and the secondary school graduation outcomes. Succinct information on college and university programs should be also included;

27. That, in order to ensure that all Ontario residents, regardless of age, have access to a secondary school diploma, publicly funded school boards be given the mandate and the funds to provide adult educational programs;

28. That a consistent process of prior learning assessment be developed for adult students in Ontario, and that this process include an examination for a secondary school equivalency diploma;

29. That the Ministry of Education and Training, with its mandate which includes post-secondary education, require the development of challenge exams and other appropriate forms of prior learning assessment by colleges and universities, to be used up to and including the granting of diplomas and degrees;

30. That the right of adults to pursue literacy education must be protected, regardless of employment status or intentions;

31. That COFAM/OTAB immediately define and set aside, for short- and medium-term adult literacy programs, a francophone allotment that is not linked to participation in the workforce, in addition to the francophone programs linked to workforce status and intention.

## **Chapter 10: Supports for Learning: Special Needs and Special Opportunities**

The Commission recommends:

32. That the Ministry make it mandatory for English-language school units to provide ESL/ESD, and French-language school units to provide ALF/PDF, to ensure that immigrant students with limited or no fluency in English or French, and Charter rights holders with limited or no fluency in French, receive the support they require, using locally chosen models of delivery. In its block-funding grants, the Ministry should include the budgetary supplements required to allow the schools to offer these programs wherever the community identifies a need for them.

33. That no child who shows difficulty or who lags behind peers in learning to read be labelled “learning disabled” unless and until he or she has received intensive individual assistance in learning to read, which has not resulted in improved academic performance;

34. That in addition to gifted programs, acceleration, based on teacher assessment, challenge exams, and/or other appropriate measures become widely available as an important option for students;

35. That when parents and educators agree on the best programming for the student, and there is a written record of a parent’s informed agreement, no Identification, Placement, and Review Committee (IPRC) process occur;

36. That when there is no agreement, and an IPRC meeting must take place, a mediator/facilitator be chosen, on an ad hoc basis, to facilitate discussion and compromise, to alleviate the likelihood of a legal appeal; and that the legislation be rewritten to provide for this pre-appeal mediation;

37. That when a student has been formally identified and placed, the annual review be replaced by semi-annual individual assessment that will show whether and how much the student has progressed over a five-month period, and decisions about continuation of the program be made based on objective evidence as well on as the judgment of the educators and parents in regard to the student’s progress;



38. That school boards look for ways to provide assistance to those who need it, without tying that assistance to a formal identification process.

39. That, while integration should be the norm, school boards continue to provide a continuum of services for students whose needs would, in the opinion of parents and educators, be best served in other settings;

40. That all elementary school teachers have regular access to a “community career co-ordinator” responsible for co-ordinating the school’s community-based, career-awareness curriculum, and working with teachers and community members to build and support the program;

41. That, beginning in Grade 6 or 7 and continuing through Grade 12, all schools have appropriately trained and certified career-education specialists to carry out career counselling functions;

42. That the Ministry, in co-operation with professional career-education groups, the Ontario School Counsellors’ Association, and the Association of Career Centres in Educational Settings, and with representation from colleges, universities, and business and labour, develop a continuum of appropriate learner outcomes in career awareness and career education for Grades 1–12;

43. That the Ministry of Education and Training take the lead in working with the Ministry of Health to develop a definition of essential mental-health promotion programs and services that should be available in the school setting; the professional training necessary to provide them; the services that should be offered to students outside the schools and by whom; and the way responsibility for providing these services is shared across ministries;

44. That the Ministry of Education and Training clarify the nature and function of personal and social guidance counselling in schools by:

- a) redefining the appropriate training required for a guidance or personal counsellor, and creating and implementing a plan for educating and re-educating those people who are now, or should now be, delivering these services to students; this redefinition should be done in co-operation with the Ontario School

Counsellors’ Association and representatives of colleges and universities; such training should also be accessible through avenues other than teacher education;

- b) ensuring that delivery of these services be implemented by personnel who, after a date to be specified, have received the agreed-on training;

45. That the Ministry of Education and Training develop a new guideline for social/personal guidance to replace *Guidance, Intermediate and Senior Divisions, 1984*, including a description of the kind of differentiated staffing needed to deliver guidance and counselling services in schools, both elementary and secondary.

## Chapter 11: Evaluating Achievement

The Commission recommends:

46. That significantly more time in pre-service and continuing professional development be devoted to training teachers to assess student learning in a way that will help students improve their performance, and we recommend supervised practice and guidance as the principal teaching/learning mechanism for doing so;

47. That the Ministry of Education and Training begin immediately to develop resource materials that help teachers learn to assess student work accurately and consistently, on the specific learner outcomes upon which standardized assessment and reporting will be based;

48. That the Ministry of Education and Training, in conjunction with professional educators, assessment experts, parents, students, and members of the general public, design a common report card appropriate for each grade. To be known as the Ontario Student Achievement Report, it would relate directly to the outcomes and standards of the given year or course and, in all years, would be used as the main vehicle for communicating, to parents and students, information about the student’s achievements. While school boards would not be permitted to delete any part of the OSAR, they could seek permission from the Ministry to add to it;



49. That the Ministry monitor its own assessment instruments for possible bias, and work with boards and professional bodies to monitor other assessment instruments; that teachers be offered more knowledge and training in detecting and eradicating bias in all aspects of assessment; and that the Ministry monitor the effects of assessment on various groups;

50. That all students be given two uniform assessments at the end of Grade 3, one in literacy and one in numeracy, based on specific learner outcomes and standards that are well known to teachers, parents, and to students themselves;

51. That the construction, administration, scoring, and reporting of the two assessments be the responsibility of a small agency, independent of the Ministry of Education and Training, and operating at a very senior level, to be called the Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability;

52. That a literacy test be given to students, which they must pass before receiving their secondary school diploma;

53. That the Ministry continue to be involved in and to support national and international assessments, and work to improve their calibre;

54. That the Ministry develop detailed, multi-year plans for large-scale assessments (program reviews, examination monitoring), which establish the data to be collected and the way implementation will be monitored, and report the results publicly, and provide for the interpretation and use of results to educators and to the public;

55. That, initially, and for a five- to seven-year period, until the process is well established in the school system and in the public consciousness, an independent accountability agency be charged with implementing and reporting the Grades 3 and 11 universal student assessments. The reports and recommendations of the Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability would go directly to the Minister and the public;

56. That the Ministry of Education and Training, in consultation with community members and researchers, develop a specific procedure for collecting and reporting province-wide data on student achievement (marks, and Grade 3 and

Grade 11 literacy test results) for groups identified according to gender, race, ethno-cultural background, and socio-economic status.

## **Chapter 12: The Educators**

The Commission recommends:

57. That the Education Act be amended to allow instructors who are not certified teachers to supervise students, under specified conditions and circumstances, and to deliver certain non-academic programs. Instructors might be health, recreational, and social-work personnel, or other members of the community, as designated by the school's principal;

58. That a professional self-regulatory body for teaching, the Ontario College of Teachers, be established, with the powers, duties, and membership of the College set out in legislation. The College should be responsible for determining professional standards, certification, and accreditation of teacher education programs. Professional educators should form a majority of the membership of the College, with substantial representation of non-educators from the community at large;

59. That the College of Teachers, in close co-operation with faculties of education, develop a framework for accrediting teacher preparation programs offered by Ontario faculties of education, and that the College be responsible for carrying out such accreditation processes;

60. That faculties of education and school staff who supervise student teachers be accountable for ensuring that those recommended for Ontario Teaching Certificates have the qualities required for admission to the teaching profession, and that those candidates who do not show such qualities be advised to leave teacher preparation programs;

61. That faculties expand their efforts to admit more student teachers from previously under-represented groups, including ethno-cultural and racial minorities, aboriginal communities, and those who are disabled, and that they be accountable to the College of Teachers for demonstrating significant progress toward achieving this objective;

62. That faculties of education, school boards, and teachers' federations develop joint programs to encourage more



young people from minority groups to consider teaching as a career, and to ensure that minority youth and adults interested in teaching have opportunities to gain the necessary experience with children and adolescents;

63. That faculties of education establish partnership arrangements with selected school boards and schools in the public, Roman Catholic, and French-language systems that agree to work with faculties in preparing student teachers. In such designated “professional development schools,” staff from faculties and from the schools would be jointly responsible for planning the program and for guiding student teachers through their learning;

64. That school staff with responsibility for student teachers be selected jointly by the faculty of education and the school principal, and that they participate in a significant and well-designed preparation program themselves, to ensure that they have a fully developed understanding of the process of learning to teach, and a shared understanding of the skills, knowledge, competencies, and values that beginning teachers should have;

65. That school staff supervising student teachers have significant input into recommendations for certification;

66. That common undergraduate prerequisites be established for entry to pre-service teacher preparation programs, with decisions about specific prerequisites to be made by the College of Teachers, with input from faculties of education and school boards;

67. That faculties of arts and science be encouraged to work with faculties of education to develop suitable undergraduate courses, where these do not exist, in subjects that are prerequisites for entry to faculties of education;

68. That the consecutive program for teacher education be extended to two years, and that one year be added to the concurrent program, and that the Bachelor of Education degree be awarded on successful completion of the two-year program or, in the case of the concurrent program, on completion of the equivalent of the two-year education program;

69. That the current practice-teaching requisite of 40 days be replaced by a requirement that student teachers spend at least that much time observing and working in designated

“professional development schools” during the first year of the B.Ed. program, and that they spend a substantial portion (at least three months) of the second year working in schools, under the supervision of school staff. As well, a similar requirement for students in concurrent programs should be established over the length of the pre-service program;

70. That faculties of education recommend to the College of Teachers that those who have been awarded B.Ed. degrees be given a provisional Ontario Teaching Certificate;

71. That the Ontario Teaching Certificate be made permanent on completion of one year’s teaching in Ontario, on the recommendation of a qualified principal or supervisory officer. However, this certification process would be quite distinct from the employing board’s decision concerning probationary and permanent contracts;

72. That the College of Teachers develop a set of criteria for certifying staff for school readiness programs, and that whatever preparation and certification requirements are adopted, teachers in early childhood education programs have qualifications equivalent to other teachers, and be equal in status;

73. That the College of Teachers consider how to recognize staff members who are currently licensed as early childhood educators or certified primary teachers and who will be affected by the establishment of school readiness programs for three-year-olds in publicly funded schools;

74. That school boards be required to provide appropriate and sustained professional support to all first-year teachers, to ease their entry into full-time teaching;

75. That mandatory professional development be required for all educators in the publicly funded school system, with continuing certification every five years, dependent on both satisfactory performance and participation in professional development recognized by the College of Teachers;

76. That the Ministry of Education and Training, school boards, and federations, in collaboration with the College of Teachers, investigate and encourage various ways of providing opportunities for professional renewal for teachers and school administrators;



77. That all school boards make information available to the public about their performance appraisal systems, using newsletters or other means, so that students, parents, teachers, and the public are aware of the basis of performance appraisal and the guidelines being followed;

78. That all school board performance appraisal systems include provision for systematically and regularly seeking input from students and parents in regard to teaching, classroom, and school atmosphere, and to related matters about which they may have concerns or suggestions;

79. That beginning teachers have an opportunity to get helpful performance feedback from colleagues other than the principal or vice-principal, understanding that such information will not be used for decisions about permanent contracts. Designated mentor teachers – or in secondary schools, department heads – could provide this assistance;

80. That the College of Teachers, the Ministry, and school boards emphasize that principals are accountable for satisfactory teacher performance in their schools, and that supervisory officers are responsible for ensuring that principals take appropriate action in dealing with teachers whose performance is not satisfactory;

81. That the Ministry, teachers' federations, and school boards reach agreement on any changes required to ensure that policies and practices related to dismissal effectively balance the rights of teachers and the rights of students;

82. That an M.Ed. degree be a requirement for appointment to the position of vice-principal or principal;

83. That the provincial courses to prepare candidates to become principals continue, but that these courses be regularly evaluated, starting immediately, by an external review team, composed of practising principals, supervisory officers, academics in the field of educational administration, and at least one member from outside Ontario. The review should be rigorous, to assess how successfully the course addresses the skills and knowledge required, as well as the needs of the system. Continuation of any courses would depend on a satisfactory evaluation;

84. That school boards create a variety of structured experiences through which aspiring and junior administrators can

learn leadership skills. Such experiences would include internships or job shadowing, exchanges outside the education field, secondments to a number of different educational settings, and organized rotation of vice-principals to different schools;

85. That appointment to the position of principal or vice-principal be for a five-year term, continuation of the appointment to depend on evidence of participation in, and successful completion of, professional development programs satisfactory to the employing school board, and on satisfactory performance;

86. That in light of recent and proposed changes in the nature and organization of secondary school programs:

- a) the role of department head be reviewed, with a view to reducing the number of department heads where appropriate;
- b) responsibilities of department heads include supervision and evaluation of teachers in their departments;
- c) appropriate professional development be provided for department heads;

87. That school boards review the responsibilities of supervisory officers in light of the changes in governance and organization recommended in this report, with a view to reducing the number of supervisory officers as appropriate, as current incumbents retire, and, if necessary, changing responsibilities assigned to supervisory officers, as organizational needs change;

88. That the Supervisory Officer Qualification Programs continue, but be regularly evaluated, starting immediately, by an independent review team, which would include supervisory officers and academics in educational administration, as well as some members from outside Ontario. The continuation of programs should depend on a satisfactory evaluation from this team;

89. That requirements for admission to the Supervisory Officer Qualifications Program be adjusted, to make it possible for school boards to appoint administrators from outside Ontario as supervisory officers;



90. That school boards provide current and aspiring supervisory officers with increased opportunities for varied experiences, both in and outside the educational system, including exchange programs with government and business;

91. That newly appointed supervisory officers be given a minimum of 15 days release time during their first year in the position, for participation in structured professional development activities such as:

- a) working with other supervisory officers to increase their understanding of their new roles;
- b) taking part in a study group or series of workshops with other newly appointed supervisory officers;

92. That supervisory officers be appointed for a five-year term, with a continuation of the appointment dependent on successful participation in professional development recognized by the employing board, and on satisfactory performance.

### **Chapter 13: Learning , Teaching and Information Technology**

The Commission recommends:

93. That the Ministry be responsible for overseeing the increased and effective use of information technology in the province's schools, and that its role include

- a) determining the extent and nature of the computer-related resources now in use in schools across Ontario;
- b) functioning as an information clearing house for these resources, assuring that all boards are privy to such information, and preventing unnecessary duplication of effort;
- c) facilitating alliances among the Ministry, school boards, hardware and software firms, and the private sector;
- d) developing common standards jointly with system partners, for producing and acquiring technology;
- e) developing license protocols that support multiple remote users accessing centrally held software in a local area network (LAN) or wide area network (WAN) structure; and

- f) co-ordinating efforts, including research and special projects, to refine effective educational assessment programs;

94. That school boards in co-operation with the Ministry, the private sector, universities, and colleges, initiate a number of high-profile and diverse projects on school computers and learning, to include a major infusion of computer hardware and software. These projects should reflect the province's diversity, include a distinct and comprehensive evaluation component, and be used for professional development, software design, and policy analysis;

95. That the Minister approach colleagues in other provinces, through the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada, to establish a national network of projects on computers and learning, which can inform teaching and learning from sea to sea;

96. That the proposed College of Teachers require faculties of education to make knowledge and skills in the educational use of information technology an integral part of the curriculum for all new teachers;

97. That teachers be provided with, and participate in, professional development that will equip them with the knowledge and skills they need to make appropriate use of information technology in the classroom, and that acquisition of such knowledge become a condition of re-certification;

98. That the Ministry of Education and Training and the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, working through learning consortiums and existing federal government programs, co-ordinate efforts with the Ontario business community to distribute surplus computers through Ontario school boards, and that, as more computers are introduced into the school system, priority be given to equipping schools serving low-income and Franco-Ontarian communities;

99. That the Ministry increase the budget allocated for purchasing software on behalf of school boards in Ontario, and that it increase boards' flexibility in using funds to



permit leasing or other cost-sharing arrangements, in addition to purchasing, in acquiring information technology equipment;

100. That computer software and all other electronic resources used in education be treated as teaching materials for the purpose of Circular 14 assessment (for quality, balance, bias, etc.);

101. That the Ministry, with the advice of educators in the field, identify priority areas in which Canadian content and perspective are now lacking;

102. That the Ministry exercise leadership with the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada to initiate a program promoting production of high-quality Canadian educational software by Canadian companies and other appropriate bodies, such as school boards, universities, and colleges;

103. That the Government of Ontario, working with school boards and other appropriate agencies, commit itself to ensuring that every classroom in every publicly funded school in Ontario is connected to at least one local computer network and that, in turn, this network is connected to a provincial network, a national network, and the Internet;

104. That school boards, in co-operation with government ministries and appropriate agencies, establish in neighbourhoods where personal computer access is less likely to be prevalent community computing centres, possibly in school buildings or in public libraries, and provide on-going funding for hardware, software, and staffing;

105. That the Ministry support boards in pilot projects that extend the opportunity for learners to access funded programs and equipment outside the defined school day;

106. That the Government of Ontario advocate that public facilities, such as public libraries and schools, and such non-profit groups as "freenets," be given guaranteed access to the facilities of the electronic highway at an affordable cost (preferably free for users of these facilities);

107. That the Ministry proceed to upgrade Contact North from an audio to an interactive video network.

## **Chapter 14: Community Education**

The Commission recommends:

108. That the Ministry of Education and Training mandate that each school in Ontario establish a school-community council, with membership drawn from the following sectors:

- parents
- students (from Grade 7 on)
- teachers
- representatives from local religious and ethnic communities
- service providers (government and non-government)
- municipal government(s)
- service clubs and organizations
- business sectors;

109. That each school principal devise an action plan for the establishment and implementation of the school-community council;

110. That school boards provide support to principals to establish and maintain school-community councils and that the boards monitor the councils' progress and indicate the progress in their annual reports;

111. That the Ministry of Education and Training, teachers' federations, and school boards take whatever actions are necessary to ensure that community liaison staff persons are sufficiently available to assist principals in strengthening school-community linkages. These staff, who would not be certified teachers, would be responsible for helping to implement decisions and initiatives of the school-community councils as well as other school-community initiatives;

112. That the Premier assign responsibility for reforming children's services to a senior Minister, in addition to his/her regular portfolio; and that this senior Minister be supported by an Interministerial Committee of Ministers responsible for children's services; and that

- a) the Committee be assisted by permanent staff;
- b) the Committee include the systematic review and revision of
  - service approaches taken
  - quality of services provided
  - funding mechanisms



- legislation
- regional organization of authority
- provincial structures;

c) the Committee establish, through the regional offices of the MET, a leadership and co-ordinating plan between the school boards and the other local providers of services to develop and help implement the mechanisms necessary to support the work of school-community councils.

113. That the provincial government review legislative and related impediments, and that they develop a policy framework for collaboration to facilitate partnerships between community and schools;

114. That the Interministerial Committee of Ministers, under the senior minister responsible, as its first task set a sustainable timeline for implementing community partnership, policies, and mechanisms, with specific points for reporting and disseminating the results of the efforts.

## Chapter 15: Constitutional Issues

The Commission recommends:

115. That section 136, which restricts preferential hiring in the Roman Catholic school system, be removed from the Education Act;

116. That, with reference to the role of the Roman Catholic education system, the Ministry of Education and Training ensure appropriate and influential representation from the Roman Catholic education system at all levels of its professional and managerial staff, up to and including that of Assistant Deputy Minister; and that the Minister establish a Roman Catholic Education Policy and Programs Team or branch in the Ministry;

117. That the Ministry of Education and Training and the faculties of education establish a pre-service credit course in the foundations of Roman Catholic education, and that this course be available at all faculties of education in Ontario;

118. That the religious education courses currently offered at faculties of education receive full credit status and be made part of the regular academic program;

119. That, with reference to the admission of non-rightholders to French-language schools:

- a) the Minister of Education and Training give the CEFFO a mandate in consultation with school boards, to propose and ensure the adoption of uniform criteria for the admission of “non-rightholders” or their children;
- b) the Ministry of Education and Training require school boards to assume responsibility for making information about these criteria available to the relevant communities, particularly ethno-cultural communities;
- c) the composition of committees to admit non-rightholders or their children include one or more Franco-Ontarian parents and one or more parents from ethno-cultural communities;

120. That the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training give the Conseil de l’éducation et de la formation franco-ontariennes (CEFFO) the mandate to recommend to the Ministry, as soon as possible and on the basis of existing documents, school governance model(s) by and for francophones, encompassing education from pre-school to the end of secondary school without, however, seeking to define structures that are administratively symmetrical to those of the English-language system; and that the government, through the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, approve and diligently implement the recommendations submitted by the CEFFO with respect to school governance by and for francophones;

121. That funding by the Ministry of Education and Training automatically include among its calculation of grants and weighting factors, for all French-language instructional units, the budgetary supplements required to allow these units to offer, according to the needs identified by the community:

- a) accelerated language retrieval programs (designed for recovery, actualization, and skill and development); and
- b) the necessary *animation culturelle* in classes and schools;



122. That for the early childhood education programs (children age 3 to 5), one of our key recommendations in Chapter 7, the provincial government give priority funding to French-language instructional units over every other school;

123. That rather than having the two levels of government work independently of each other, and in order to avoid duplication, the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario jointly fund for use in both on-reserve schools and schools under provincial jurisdiction, the development of curriculum guidelines and resource materials that more accurately reflect the history of Canada's aboriginal people and their contribution to Canada's literature, culture, history, and values, and in other areas to be incorporated throughout the curriculum;

124. That the Governments of Canada and Ontario jointly fund the development of assessment and teaching strategies that are more sensitive to the learning styles identified by aboriginal educators;

125. That the federal and provincial governments work with Native education authorities and the First Nations to provide better support to students who must live away from their communities to obtain elementary and/or secondary education;

126. That the federal government review its method of funding education for Native students in on-reserve schools to ensure there are adequate funds to provide any necessary special programs to support aboriginal education and for professional support of teachers;

127. That the province include in its requirements for pre-service and in-service teacher education a component related to teaching aboriginal students and teaching about aboriginal issues to both Native and non-Native students;

128. That the federal government, which has responsibility in this field, give top priority to ensuring the availability of good telecommunications throughout Ontario in order to support education through the use of interactive video and computer networking;

129. That both the federal and provincial governments provide resources to support the development of courses, initially video- and CD-ROM-based, that would use interactive technology when an adequate telecommunication infrastructure is in place;

130. That the federal government provide assistance to aboriginal peoples to develop language teaching resources co-operatively with communities that use the same languages, in other provinces and in the United States;

131. That the province, in co-operation with First Nations communities and school boards, develop guidelines for permitting the use of Native languages as languages of instruction, where teachers and teaching resources are available;

132. That the provincial and federal governments continue their programs to develop resource materials that support the teaching of Native languages and culture for teacher in-service and for classroom use in on- and off-reserve schools, providing such materials are made available to other boards and schools;

133. That the Ministry and the representatives of the First Nations review the Declaration of Political Intent proposal on Native trustee representation, taking into account possible changes in overall board structures that could follow the issue of this report, and that at the earliest opportunity the parties implement the agreement that results;

134. That the federal and provincial governments continue negotiations that lead to full self-governance of education by the First Nations;

135. That the province develop a different way of dealing with band-operated elementary and secondary schools than it now has. Such a method would:

- a) recognize that they are publicly funded schools of a First Nation, governed by a duly constituted education authority; and
- b) permit more reciprocity and co-operation with provincial school boards.



## Chapter 16: Equity Considerations

The Commission recommends:

136. That the Ministry of Education and Training always have an Assistant Deputy Minister responsible, in addition to other duties, for advocacy on behalf of anglophone, francophone, ethno-cultural and racial minorities;

137. That trustees, educators, and support staff be provided with professional development in anti-racism education;

138. That the performance management process for supervisory officers, principals, and teachers specifically include measurable outcomes related directly to anti-racism policies and plans of the Ministry and the school boards;

139. That, for the purposes of the anti-racism and ethno-cultural equity provisions of Bill 21, the Ministry of Education and Training require boards and schools to seek input from parents and community members in implementing and monitoring the plans. This process should be linked to the overall school and board accountability mechanisms;

140. That the Ministry and school boards systematically review and monitor teaching materials of all types (texts, reading materials, videos, software, etc.), as well as teaching practices, educational programs (curriculum), and assessment tools to ensure that they are free of racism and meet the spirit and letter of anti-racism policies;

141. That in jurisdictions with large numbers of black students, school boards, academic authorities, faculties of education, and representatives of the black community collaborate to establish demonstration schools and innovative programs based on best practices in bringing about academic success for black students;

142. That whenever there are indications of collective under-achievement in any particular group of students, school boards ensure that teachers and principals have the necessary strategies and human and financial resources to help these students improve.

## Chapter 17: Organizing education

The Commission recommends:

143. That all boards have at least one student member, entitled to vote on all board matters, subject to the usual conflict-of-interest and legal requirements;

144. That student councils be given the responsibility for organizing students' views on all aspects of school life, and for transmitting these views to teachers and principals with responses sent back to students in a systematic way, and that they provide advice to student trustees;

145. That the Minister of Education and Training establish a Student and Youth Council, to advise on all educational matters, to seek further ways to involve students in decisions that affect their lives, and to sponsor research about what students can do to improve learning in schools;

146. That the Ministry organize a collaborative process for developing a Students' Charter of Rights and Responsibilities, and that the process include a significant role for students. The essential elements of such a charter must include a description of the kind of information a student is entitled to receive, the programs and services to which a student is entitled, the responsibilities a student is expected to accept, the role that students are entitled to play in the decisions made in the system, and the recourse available if students feel that their rights have not been upheld;

147. That students be involved in developing and regularly reviewing codes of behaviour and other selected policies and procedures that flow from the Students' Charter of Rights and Responsibilities at both board and school levels. These policies and procedures may not take away from the rights and responsibilities specified in the charter;

148. That information about the students' charter and all policies and procedures that directly affect students be made available to all students in a way most students can readily understand;

149. That the Ministry phase in a policy requiring school boards to turn over an increasingly significant portion of the school budget to principals, on the condition that the school have a school growth plan; that this plan be monitored by the board; that teachers participate in decision-making concerning curriculum, assessment, professional develop-



ment, and staffing; and that the school demonstrate how it reaches out to students, parents, and the community;

150. That a Parents' Charter of Rights and Responsibilities be developed at the provincial level as a result of collaboration among parents, teachers, administrators, and political decision-makers;

151. That parents be involved in developing student codes of behaviour, and other policies and procedures that flow from the Students' and Parents' Charter of Rights and Responsibilities at both board and school levels;

152. That information about the students' and parents' charters and all policies and procedures that directly affect students and parents be readily available to parents;

153. That all schools in Ontario be accountable for demonstrating the ways in which they have strengthened parents' involvement in their children's school learning;

154. That the Minister of Education and Training, in consultation with the provincial trustees' associations, review and revise the legislation and regulations governing education, in order to clarify the policy-making, as distinct from the operational, responsibilities of school board trustees;

155. That the Ministry set a scale of honoraria for trustees, with a maximum of \$20,000 per annum;

156. That following the proposed shift to the provincial government of the responsibility for determining the funding of education, the two-tiered governance structure of the public schools in Metropolitan Toronto be phased out, with the Metropolitan Toronto School Board being replaced by an administrative consortium of school boards in the Metropolitan Toronto area;

157. That the Ministry clearly set out its leadership and management roles, especially in relation to school boards, teacher federations, and faculties of education, and that it develop a plan for more complete communication with all those interested in elementary and secondary education;

158. That, in order to maximize their influence within the Ministry, assistant deputy ministers representing particular constituencies be placed in charge of the portfolio of issues related to their respective constituencies, as well as being

responsible for other important dossiers related to education for all Ontarians;

## **Chapter 18: Funding**

The Commission recommends:

159. That equal per-pupil funding across the province, as well as additional money needed by some school boards for true equity, be decided at the provincial level, and that the province ensure that funds be properly allocated;

160. That boards be allowed to raise a further sum, no greater than 10 percent of their provincially determined budget, from residential assessment only;

161. That all residential property owners be required to direct their taxes to the school system they are entitled to and wish to support, and that undirected taxes be pooled and distributed on a per-pupil basis;

162. That the Ministry of Education and Training first decide what it considers to be an adequate educational program for the province, and then determine the cost of delivering this program in various areas of the province, taking into account different student needs and varying community characteristics, such as geography, poverty rates, and language, that affect education costs.

## **Chapter 19: The Accountability of the System**

The Commission recommends:

163. That the government establish an Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability, reporting to the Legislature. Its first responsibility would be the Grades 3 and 11 system-wide, every-student assessments (Cf. Rec. 51);

164. That the Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability also be responsible for developing indicators of system performance, to be used at the board and provincial levels;

165. That the Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability, working with education stakeholders, also establish guidelines for the content of annual reports prepared by school boards and by the Minister of Education and Training. Further, we recommend that:



- a) these reports be published and be freely and widely available in schools and community locations;
- b) the Ministry of Education and Training ensure that all school boards be informed of guidelines for the reports, and that they follow those guidelines;

166. That the work and mandate of the Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability be reviewed in five years.

## **Chapter 20: Implementing the Reforms**

The Commission recommends:

167. That an Implementation Commission be established to oversee the implementation of the recommendations made by the Royal Commission on Learning.



## Commissioners' Biographies

### Monique Bégin

#### Co-chair

A former teacher, Monique Bégin completed her M.A. in sociology at l'Université de Montréal and did doctoral studies at l'Université de Paris (Sorbonne), before working as a consultant in applied social sciences in Montréal. From 1967 to 1970, she served as the executive secretary to the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada and co-signed the report to Parliament. After two years as assistant director of research at the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission, she ran for Parliament as a Liberal.

Re-elected four times (1972–84), Monique Bégin is best known as the first woman MP elected from Quebec to the House of Commons, and as minister of National Health and Welfare (1977–84). In that portfolio, she sponsored a range of legislation, including the Canada Health Act.

Since September 1984, when she left politics, Monique Bégin has been a visiting professor at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, and McGill University in Montreal, before becoming the first holder of the joint Chair in Women's Studies at the University of Ottawa and Carleton University. In 1990 she was appointed dean of the new Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Ottawa.

### Gerald L. Caplan

#### Co-chair

Gerald Caplan has had a varied career as an academic and educator, political and social activist, public policy analyst, and public affairs commentator.

He has an M.A. in Canadian history from the University of Toronto and a PhD in African history from the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London. He has taught in the history departments at the University of Toronto, the University College of Rhodesia, and the Department of History and Philosophy of Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. He is the author of several books, many articles and book reviews in academic journals, as well as magazine and newspaper columns.

After leaving OISE in 1977, Gerald Caplan became the Director of the CUSO program in Nigeria, after which he ran the Health Advocacy Unit of the City of Toronto. He then became federal secretary (national director) of the New Democratic Party and national campaign manager for the 1984 election. Shortly after leaving that position, he was appointed (by the Mulroney government) as co-chair of a federal task force on Canadian broadcasting policy. Between the completion of the report on broadcasting policy in 1986 and becoming co-chair of the Royal Commission on Learning in 1993, he was primarily engaged as a newspaper columnist and television commentator, as well as a consultant on government relations.



**Manisha Bharti**  
**Commissioner**

Manisha Bharti has a list of accomplishments that would be impressive in a woman twice her 19 years. A graduate of St. Lawrence High School in Cornwall, she is currently studying at Harvard University.

Academically, she was a gold award winner, with an average of 90 percent or more in her secondary school courses. In the Waterloo University Mathematics Contests, Manisha finished in the top eight percent of Ontario. Throughout high school, she was a member of her school's SchoolReach and Canada Quiz academic teams. She spent one summer involved in biological research at the University of Guelph and, upon graduation, she was awarded the governor general's medal of distinction.

Manisha was extremely active in a variety of high school activities, including the school environmental club, the school spirit club, and the student leaders organizing committee. She was the Student Council president, chair of the SD&G Inter-School Student Council, and Eastern South Region vice-president of the OSSSA – the Ontario Secondary School Students Association. Manisha was also a representative on the Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry County Board of Education Race Relations and Ethnocultural Equity Committee, as well as involved in the board's Environmental and Vision 2000 steering committees.

Manisha has also been active in the broader community, volunteering with the Cornwall Alzheimer Association and the Cornwall Environment Resource Centre. She is a past president of OCTAGON, the Optimist Youth Service Club, and she has volunteered at the Hotel Dieu Hospital. In addition to all this activity, Manisha has attended a number of youth-related conferences and travelled extensively.

**Avis E. Glaze**  
**Commissioner**

Avis Glaze taught in secondary school and teachers' college in Jamaica before applying to the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education to pursue post-graduate studies. There she completed master's programs in the areas of educational administration, guidance, and counselling, and additional courses in special education, curriculum, measurement and evaluation, and educational psychology. She completed her doctorate in 1979.

Dr. Glaze has taught at all levels of education – elementary, secondary, community college, teachers' college, and university – and has been a superintendent of schools in both the separate and public school systems. As well, she is a member of the Board of Governors of Humber College of Applied Arts and Technology, and a member of the Senate of York University. Dr. Glaze has won awards for her outstanding contribution to education.

In 1983, Dr. Glaze was seconded to the Curriculum Branch of the Ministry of Education as an education officer. She also served as a research co-ordinator with the Ontario Women's Directorate and has worked with both the Ontario and Canadian Advisory Councils on the Status of Women. She is called upon frequently to present at major conferences and to conduct professional development sessions with teachers and workshops with parents and students. Her most recent community involvement is with the Harry Gairey Scholarship Fund.

Dr. Glaze is currently a superintendent of education with the North York Board and a course director in the Faculty of Education of York University.



## **Dennis J. Murphy**

### **Commissioner**

Dennis Murphy is a priest of the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie and was ordained in 1960. He studied in North Bay, Toronto, Rome, Brussels, and Ottawa, receiving his PhD in education from the University of Ottawa in 1971. Monsignor Murphy has served in his diocese as a parish priest, Chancellor, and Director of Religious Education. He was also a lecturer in religious studies at Laurentian University.

At the national level, from 1967 to 1970 he was the director of the National Office for Religious Education, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, and from 1977 to 1984 he was general secretary of the Conference of Bishops.

In 1986 he founded the Institute for Catholic Education in Toronto, and for the first several years was its executive director.

In 1977 Dennis Murphy was elected to the Nipissing District Roman Catholic Separate School Board, and served for a brief period. He was also chaplain of the Ontario Separate School Trustees Association from 1967 to 1985, and the chaplain of the Canadian Catholic School Trustees' Association from 1971 to 1977.

Throughout his career, he has also served on many boards, including the North Bay Crisis Centre, the Metropolitan Toronto Catholic Children's Aid Society, St. Joseph's Hospital in North Bay, and the University of St. Jerome's College in Kitchener.











